



PROJECT SHOWCASE

TEC Products Support Expanded Cancer Care in Southwestern Michigan

More than 2,000 people are diagnosed with cancer annually—about six per day—in Southwestern Michigan’s Kalamazoo, Calhoun and Van Buren Counties.

The region’s largest health system, Bronson Healthcare, saw an opportunity to enhance care for these patients when, in 2018, it was determined that medical oncology and hematology services would transition from the West Michigan Cancer Center into its own facilities in 2021. A key advantage of the move was that patients would be able to coordinate their cancer care within the same system as their

other medical care, which would allow better communication with providers and one central electronic health record for all visits.

Plans began for a brand-new cancer center at Bronson Methodist Hospital in downtown Kalamazoo. Bronson Healthcare wanted a facility that could accommodate more patients and offer more services to support treatment, recovery and survivorship. The building design also needed to be flexible so the health system could expand cancer services over time in response to changing technology and practices.



An exceptional patient experience was the overriding vision for the center. Carrie Cairns, Facility Development Coordinator for Bronson Healthcare, says, “Our goal was to create a comfortable, healing environment for patients and their family members.”

Designing with durability and ease in mind

Bronson Healthcare enlisted Diekema Hamann Architecture & Engineering to design the new five-story, 85,000-square-foot facility, which opened to patients in January 2021.

The design utilized flooring and wall covering materials that would create a warm, hospitable space for patients and families going through a difficult time while also meeting the high-traffic, high-performance demands of a medical facility. This included over 14,000 square feet of floor tile and another 4,600 square feet of wall tile paired with TEC® Power Grout® and Ultimate 6 Plus mortar, all of which were supplied by Virginia Tile. Great Lakes Flooring Specialists, a contractor that specializes in hospitals, oversaw the installation, with Steve Irmen doing the wall panels and Paul Sigourney installing the floors.

Early in the process, Lisa McLean, A&D Representative for Virginia Tile, worked collaboratively with Designer Valerie Wright of Diekema Hamann. Wright says they selected tiles that would be “durable and easy to maintain” for the setting, which included large-format floor

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-Valerie Wright, Diekema Hamann Architecture & Engineering

tiles and thin porcelain wall panels that came in sizes as big as 24-by-47 inches and 3-by-10 feet, respectively. These extra-large sizes minimize grout joints and make the surface easy to clean because of its low porosity. “Large format is the cutting edge, especially for walls,” says McLean.

In addition to the tile selected, Wright notes, “The products that might be considered behind the scenes are equally important. The TEC products specified for the new Bronson Cancer Pavilion were done with intentionality based on their high-performance value and prior relationship with the products.”

High-performing, long-lasting grout and mortar

Both TEC products offer high quality and low maintenance, with a limited lifetime warranty for added peace of mind.

Power Grout is inherently stain-resistant, so there is no need to periodically apply a separate penetrating sealer. Justin Roberts, Project Manager with Great Lakes Flooring Specialists, says, “The grout color they chose for Bronson is a lighter grey, so having the built-in sealer will make sure it stays

looking clean and fresh over time.” Power Grout is also mold and mildew resistant—a critical feature in a healthcare setting—and it has zero efflorescence or VOCs. Although it is a sanded grout and therefore strong, it is unlike other sanded grouts in that it allows grout lines to go as narrow as one-sixteenth of an inch for a less porous surface, which again makes cleaning and upkeep easy.

Ultimate 6 Plus mortar can be used with any-sized tile, and when paired with the thin porcelain wall panels at Bronson, it adds lasting strength to an otherwise delicate material. The product’s strength also ensures safety. A striking focal point of the building’s interior is a 26-foot atrium that features a fireplace tiled floor-to-ceiling in the large porcelain panels. Firmly adhered with Ultimate 6 Plus mortar, the 3-by-10-foot panels aren’t going anywhere.

Roberts says, “There was no cutting corners in terms of the quality of the products they were using or in the safety requirements needed.”

Versatility ensures an efficient installation

When it came to installing the tile, the versatility of Ultimate 6 Plus and Power Grout simplified a complex installation. About a half dozen different types of tile had to be laid, some in a detailed floor pattern—but Ultimate 6 Plus and Power Grout worked with all of them. They are one-and-done products. “For the ease of the installers, the worst thing you can do on a nice-sized project like this is to throw multiple products at them,” says Randy Hays, contractor representative with Virginia Tile.



With multiple tradespeople coming through the large facility, the Ultimate 6 Plus and Power Grout were also ideal in terms of turnover. With a six-hour set time for Ultimate 6 Plus, workers could move on to grouting much faster than with a longer-setting mortar. However, Ultimate 6 Plus is not a quick-set mortar—a good thing, because it allows two hours of working time.

“A quick-set mortar would set up in three to four hours, but you only have about 45 minutes of working time,” says Hays. “When you are working with large-format tile, it’s a slower process for installing. You have to get it right the first time.”

Power Grout offers a shorter working time, but it sets up in three to five hours. By the next day after installing the tile in Bronson Cancer Center, everything was walkable so other trades could get in to finish their work in the building.

TEC® Power Grout® is inherently stain-resistant, so there is no need to periodically apply a separate penetrating sealer.



“These materials were ideal for Bronson from both an installation and performance standpoint,” says Charlie Renner, Technical Sales Professional for TEC products. “When it’s done correctly, it will last forever.”

A successful grand opening

Since opening to patient care in January, the community has shown strong support for Bronson Cancer Center. Spacious infusion bays, comfortable exam rooms and large family consult rooms all deliver on the promise of an exceptional patient experience. The facility also houses a café, retail boutique, activity studio and massage therapy services. Carrie Cairns of Bronson Healthcare says, “Patients and visitors have been impressed with the new facility and the kindness of the care team working inside the new building.”

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-Charlie Renner, TEC





Contact your local sales rep to request a demo.
Have a question? Visit TECQuestions.com.



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