

CANCER RESOURCE

A publication from The Cancer Center at Lake Manassas
www.cancercenterlm.org

New Breast Cancer Radiation Technique Spares Lung and Heart

By Moira Sutton, M.D.

Patients with early stage breast cancer have a choice between mastectomy and breast conservation, which includes lumpectomy followed by radiation. Numerous studies have shown that the two treatment approaches have equivalent survival rates.

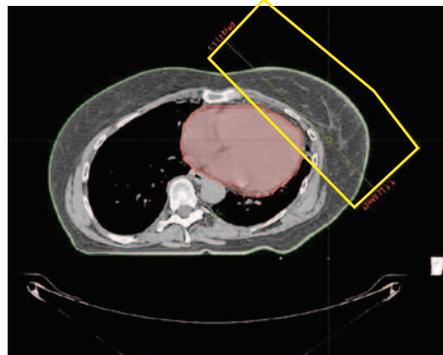
The standard regimen for radiation therapy is delivering radiation to the whole breast for approximately five weeks, followed by a boost to the tumor's original location for approximately one week. Traditionally, patients are positioned lying on their back. In this position, a small portion of the lung and the heart, if the cancer is on the left side, receive modest amounts of radiation in order to encompass all of the breast tissue in the radiation fields.

The Cancer Center now offers a better way to deliver this treatment: prone breast irradiation. Instead of lying on their back, women lie on their stomach.

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Prone breast irradiation: The radiation area (represented by the yellow box) barely touches the chest cavity and does not reach the heart (red area) or lung (internal black area).



Supine breast irradiation: The radiation area (represented by the yellow box) touches the heart (red area) and lung (internal black area).

Multi-Disciplinary Teams Plan Personalized Breast Cancer Treatments

Most doctors recognize that collaborating with a patient's other physicians helps them make the best treatment decisions. At The Cancer Center, this type of collaboration is a cornerstone of breast cancer care.



Before a woman begins treatment, physicians participate in a multi-disciplinary meeting to discuss the case. In an atmosphere of mutual respect, doctors openly discuss all aspects of the patient's care and all her treatment options to determine the best course of action. These multi-disciplinary meetings might bring together medical and radiation

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The Cancer Center
 at Lake Manassas

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A Note from Patient Navigator Jackie Glenn

Since the Patient Navigator program was implemented at The Cancer Center, I've had the opportunity to work with many of our patients, directing them to the many resources we have nationally and within our own community. It's rewarding to know that, at the end of the day, I can help take some of the burden off the patient.

I take pride in knowing I offer a service that assists not just the patient but the family, friends, and caregivers as well. Assistance can range from filling out grant applications for financial support, to finding local support groups, to guiding patients through the complex and sometimes daunting health care and insurance systems.

As The Cancer Center evolves to meet the needs of our community, I look forward to growing the Patient Navigator program and finding more opportunities to help patients find resources and get the assistance they need.



Jackie Glenn

Letter from the Medical Director

We're committed to offering the latest radiation therapy advances and providing top-quality, patient-centered care.

One of our top goals has been to establish programs that are certified by nationally recognized organizations. This assures that we are offering quality programs that meet best practices and industry-recognized standards.

Recently, we were certified as a radiation oncology facility through the American College of Radiology (ACR). The use of radiation therapy requires detailed attention to personnel, equipment, patient and personnel safety, and continuing staff education. This certification establishes that we are utilizing best practices and have experienced staff.

Our PET/CT program has also been certified by the ACR. PET/CT



scanning has become the standard-of-care imaging modality in cancer management, and this certification indicates we are a leader in this area.

Now, a top goal is to become a certified breast care center. In this issue of *Cancer Resource*, you'll read about our collaborative approach to breast cancer treatment.

Each member of The Cancer Center team is committed to providing the best possible care for our patients. These certifications, and the work that has gone into earning them, reflect that commitment and indicate the quality of care you can expect to receive at our facility.

Best Wishes,

Sanjeev K. Aggarwal, M.D.

Medical Director, The Cancer Center at Lake Manassas

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oncologists, surgeons, primary care physicians, and even plastic surgeons, who provide input on breast reconstruction after treatment.

"This is not like reading a report on the patient and deciding what to do from that," says Peter Dritschilo, administrative director of The Cancer Center. "These meetings get people talking in an honest discussion regarding the best approaches."

In a meeting, the multi-disciplinary team might discuss how a patient would benefit from chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, or any combination of those treatments. "Some doctors even bring slides to make their case," says Dritschilo.

The goal of these meetings is to use all available information and expertise to make the best treatment decisions. When a team of doctors considers all the options and comes to an agreement, the result is a personalized course of treatment for each patient.

"The best possible care comes out of these face-to-face discussions," says Dritschilo.

To recognize its excellent breast cancer care, The Cancer Center is in the process of becoming a certified breast center accredited by the American College of Surgeons. Look for updates on the breast center in future issues of *Cancer Resource*.

BRIEFS

Should You Be Tested for the Breast Cancer Gene?

When a woman with a mother, sister, or daughter diagnosed with breast cancer develops the same disease, doctors often suspect genes are to blame.

Between 5 and 10 percent of breast cancers are caused by genetic problems. Two genes—BRCA1 and BRCA2—are the most common responsible for hereditary breast cancer. Normally, these genes help keep cells from growing out of control. Defective genes fail at that task.

Not every woman who has a family history of breast cancer carries the defective gene. A blood test can check for defective BRCA1 or BRCA2

and help you make decisions about steps to reduce cancer risk. Before getting tested, talk with your doctor about genetic counseling, which can help you understand whether testing is appropriate, what the benefits and risks are, and what genetic testing can and can't tell you.

HEALTH TIP

Most breast cancer is not caused by genes. You can help prevent it by:

- Exercising regularly
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Limiting alcohol to one drink a day



In Your Words: A Smoother Path to Recovery

Initially, Rhonda Cox chose The Cancer Center at Lake Manassas for the convenient location that would make daily radiation treatments easier. This good decision was affirmed when she met the friendly, professional staff.

"The staff is all so courteous," Rhonda says. "They are always willing to answer questions. I knew I was in good hands the entire time."

In addition to receiving attentive medical care, Rhonda benefited from the Patient Navigator program. Patient Navigator Jackie Glenn helped her file for Social Security disability and get a \$750 grant. "This money helped my family pay some bills and eased the stress of not being able to contribute financially to the family," Rhonda explains.

"It's not easy asking for help, especially when you feel so vulnerable," Rhonda notes. Jackie's cheerful and upbeat demeanor helped her feel comfortable asking questions. And the assistance helped smooth Rhonda's path to recovery.

Pictured above: patient Rhonda Cox

Putting Best Practices into Practice

The Cancer Center is dedicated to pursuing best practices in cancer care and using state-of-the-art technology to provide high-quality patient care.

In pursuit of that goal, the center offers advanced radiation therapy technologies, including intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) and image guided radiation therapy (IGRT). The Cancer Center also pioneered the innovative use of PET/CT scanning for more accurate treatment planning. And The Cancer Center is the only facility in Northern Virginia to offer the faster, more precise RapidArc™ radiation therapy innovation.

Last year, the American College of Radiology (ACR) acknowledged The Cancer Center's high practice standards with a three-year accreditation award in radiation oncology services. To assess the center's radiation oncology services, the ACR sent board certified physicians and medical physicists to conduct an extensive on-site evaluation of The Cancer Center's personnel, equipment, and quality assurance procedures.

To learn the latest about radiation therapy at The Cancer Center, visit www.cancercenterlm.org.





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& Fauquier Hospitals

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In-home dates: January 3–7

Q&A with the Doctor



Sanjeev K. Aggarwal, M.D., is the medical director of The Cancer Center at Lake Manassas. He is a radiation oncologist and is certified in therapeutic radiology. Dr. Aggarwal completed his undergraduate work at the University of Virginia and continued training at the Medical College of Virginia and the University of Maryland.

Q Other than my doctors, who will I see during treatment?

A The Cancer Center has a highly qualified and caring staff of people who will work with you during your treatment, including a dosimetrist, a Certified Breast Care Nurse, radiation therapists, and a patient navigator. (See page 2 to learn more about Jackie Glenn, our patient navigator.)

Q What is a dosimetrist?

A The dosimetrist is a member of the radiation oncology team who ensures the accurate delivery of radiation. Leslie Buzzy, C.M.D., our dosimetrist, uses advanced 3-D computer technology to calculate doses. This allows her to design precise treatment plans that deliver the prescribed doses of radiation to tumors while lowering doses to sensitive tissues. Leslie was a radiation therapist for more than 20 years before becoming a board certified dosimetrist.

Q I have breast cancer. How can your Certified Breast Care Nurse help me?

A As a Certified Breast Care Nurse, Elizabeth Croson, R.N., has extensive knowledge of the issues involved in providing breast care, from prevention and detection through diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. She is also an oncology nurse who has worked closely with Dr. Aggarwal since 2009. Elizabeth's special training and skills allow her to provide care for the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of each patient during all the stages of treatment.

Q Does The Cancer Center treat skin cancer, too?

A Our doctors and therapists have experience providing radiation therapy for all forms of cancer, including skin cancer. If you've been diagnosed with skin cancer and are considering radiation therapy, contact us for more information.

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With this treatment method, patients receive the same overall dose of radiation, but the position minimizes the radiation dose to the lung, heart, and other breast, while still treating all the breast tissue. Overall, approximately one-third less of the lung under the breast receives radiation, and there is no direct irradiation of the heart (see images on page 1). Also, the radiation dose to the breast is distributed more evenly, which leads to less skin reaction and better cosmetic results.

More than 85 percent of women treated with this technique have an excellent cosmetic appearance following treatment. Furthermore, there is less concern about patient movement caused by breathing during treatments because the breast falls away from the chest wall and the patient's chest remains flat against the treatment table.

While there are advantages to prone breast irradiation, it is not appropriate for all patients, and the traditional delivery method may be preferred in some cases.

For more information or to discuss an individual case, talk to your physician or call The Cancer Center at 703-753-4045.