

Advanced Prostate Cancer Treatment Allows Men to Live an Active Life

As a pioneer in the treatment of prostate cancer with proton radiation, world renowned oncologist Carl Rossi, M.D., has seen numerous developments and advancements since he chose radiation oncology as his specialty in 1988.



Carl Rossi, M.D., is a world-renowned radiation oncologist specializing in the use of proton therapy for the treatment of prostate cancer. With more than 25 years' experience, he has treated more than 12,000 men.

Dr. Rossi, the Medical Director of California Protons Cancer Therapy Center, has simple advice for recently diagnosed prostate cancer patients.

“Upon hearing a diagnosis of prostate cancer, realize there are options for treatment. It is OK to take the time to research the various treatment options available to you and to give yourself a couple of weeks to make a decision,” he said. “Think about those options and allow yourself to look thoroughly at them and to consider each of them.”

One option is proton radiation therapy in lieu of surgery or standard radiation.

“Protons are useful forms of radiation because they stop at the target – they don’t treat what is beyond the cancer or tumor,” he said. “The cure rate with proton radiation is the same as with standard radiation and surgery, but the side effects can be significantly less.”

This decline in both short-term and long-term side effects is notable. For example, the rate of secondary cancer increases when the human body is exposed to radiation. Studies show that patients who are exposed to standard radiation have a 1.5 percent lifetime chance

of developing a secondary cancer. In comparison, those treated with proton radiation therapy, the chance of a secondary cancer is three times less or one-half of 1 percent.

Dr. Rossi has spent most of his medical career researching proton therapy and treating patients with this innovative treatment. He has treated nearly 12,000 men diagnosed with prostate cancer. Typically, he treats 300 to 350 men per year.

After completing medical school at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine, he accepted a medical training position at Loma Linda University Medical School. The year was 1988 – the same year that Loma Linda University began construction of the first proton treatment center in the U.S., and where he would train in radiation oncology. He remained on staff at Loma Linda until he accepted a position at California Protons, which today is one of only 35 proton treatment centers in the nation and four in the Western U.S.

Groundbreaking advancements in proton radiation therapy, specifically pencil beam scanning, was a factor in his decision to lead California Protons. In 2014, California Protons was the first center in the U.S. to routinely offer this type of precision treatment in all five of its treatment rooms.

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“Pencil beam scanning allows for creativity,” Dr. Rossi said. “This technology allows us to treat irregular shaped tumors and tumors in hard to reach areas, too.”

Coupled with specialized scans (CT, MRI and PET), treatments are customized. The pencil beam radiation

targets the disease and not the surrounding healthy tissue and organs. The technology is so advanced the disease can be identified clearly and in turn delivers optimal results.

Men undergoing standard radiation for prostate cancer often experience rectal problems and gastrointestinal disorders due to radiation near the small intestines and rectum. With pencil beam scanning, these side effects are minimized.

Another advancement with therapy is the use of a hydrogel product that is injected between the prostate and rectum, which expands and creates a cushion that dissolves over 3 to 4 months. The result is that the rectum is pushed away from the prostate. Because this product protects the rectal area, long-term effects and discomfort during treatment are reduced significantly.

A typical treatment plan requires five weeks of therapy for one hour, five days a week. Activities are not restricted, and patients feel well enough to return to work, play golf, walk on the beach and live their daily lives fully engaged.

Medicare covers proton treatment, and California Protons is contracted with several private insurance companies. They have a great team of patient advocates who help navigate the insurance process.

“Our patients are active and plan to be active for a long time,” Dr. Rossi said. “They still want to enjoy life. We help them do just that.”

California Protons treats many common cancers found in both adults and children, including breast cancer, lung cancer, and brain tumors. Equipped with the latest generation of technology and equipment, the Center offers the most precise form of radiation therapy available. Locally, California Protons Cancer Therapy Center is affiliated with the UC San Diego Health Cancer Network and Rady Children’s Hospital.

California Protons offers second-opinion consultations, and telemedicine appointments are available.

For more information about California Protons Cancer Therapy Center, please visit www.californiaprotions.com, or call (858) 433-4886.



Proton therapy leaves patients feeling well enough to return to work, play golf, walk on the beach and live their daily lives fully engaged.



The chance of secondary cancer is three times less likely in those who choose proton therapy over standard radiation.

