

Proton Radiation Treatment for Breast Cancer Improves Long-term Quality of Life

Proton radiation treatment has advanced dramatically in the fight against breast cancer over the past several years, and patients have discovered what research has shown: it is one of the world's safest and most effective cancer therapies available.



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Leading proton therapy radiation oncologist James Urbanic, M.D., the California Protons Cancer Therapy Center medical director for the UC San Diego Health Proton Therapy Program, has seen first-hand how the development of this revolutionary tool has contributed to changing breast cancer treatment strategies.

During the past 20 years, proton radiation treatment has evolved into an innovative precision therapy that reduces long-term side effects to physical health, particularly heart issues and secondary cancer rates, said Dr. Urbanic, a leading radiation oncology researcher.

Proton radiation treatment delivers accurate and targeted radiation through pencil-beam scanning, explained Dr. Urbanic, who has been involved with California Protons since its first year of operation. This advanced form of proton radiation is far superior than earlier versions of the therapy, he added.

California Protons is one of only 35 proton treatment centers in the nation and one of four in the Western U.S. In 2014, California Protons was the first center in the U.S. to offer highly precise pencil-beam scanning in all 5 of its treatment rooms.

Breast cancer treatment generally involves three components – surgery to remove the cancer, radiation to eradicate cancer that might have lingered and chemotherapy to destroy any cells. These three modalities work together in concert.



Advancements in proton radiation allow the radiation to be targeted so there is less damage to the surrounding tissue and organs. In the case of breast cancer, this means less radiation to the heart and lungs.

Proton radiation is an excellent choice for many cancer patients, said Dr. Urbanic, who is one of the leaders of NCI sponsored breast cancer toxicity and proton therapy research. As a physician for UC San Diego, he uniquely has all the breast cancer radiation treatment options available to offer patients.

“Patients are not always treated outside their healthcare system, so a patient needs to do their research to find all available options. Be sure to look at all of your treatment options,” said Dr. Urbanic, who treats about 50 breast cancer patients annually. “At California Protons we are happy to consult with patients and work through their options with them to determine if proton therapy is right for them.”

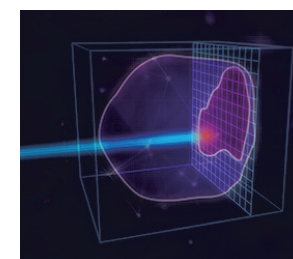
Advancements in proton radiation allow the radiation to be targeted so there is less damage to the surrounding tissue and organs. In the case of breast cancer, this means less radiation to the heart and lungs, reducing the possibility of heart disease and secondary lung cancers later in life. The rest of the body also is exposed to less radiation. Another benefit of proton radiation therapy is that pencil-beam scanning technology allows radiation oncologists to treat irregular shaped tumors, and tumors that are in hard to reach areas.

Common side effects, such as irritated or burned skin, are similar to the side effects experienced with standard radiation. However, research shows a potential reduction of significant health issues during a surviving cancer patient's lifetime. Proton radiation therapy for younger women who are premenopausal benefit greatly from radiation therapy, because of the number of life years ahead of them, research indicates.

Dr. Urbanic is passionate about research and finding ways to improve quality of life for cancer patients. He serves as a member of multiple national level cancer research groups developing large clinical trials in lung cancer, breast cancer and brain tumors. His research has been published extensively on these topics.

He specializes in various radiotherapy and radiosurgical techniques. He is drawn to developing treatments for more complex cancers, including those that affect the brain, thoracic region, the head and neck and the prostate in addition to cases requiring repeat radiation.

Support team members, such as a social worker, helps patients and their families locate resources needed while undergoing treatment such as housing and transportation. A dietitian works with patients to develop a dietary plan to help them feel their best during treatment and coordinates support groups for socialization.



Proton therapy with pencil-beam scanning technology allows radiation oncologists to treat irregular shaped tumors, and tumors that are in hard to reach areas.

California Protons treats many cancers found in both adults and children. 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.

Proton treatment is covered by Medicare and California Protons is contracted with many private insurances. Their Insurance Team specializes in working with patients and their insurance to gain coverage.

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

