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HI-TECH RADIATION ZAPS “MOVING TARGETS” ON LUNGS

POWERFUL RADIATION THERAPY YIELDS REMARKABLE RESULTS IN LUNG CANCERS

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) - It might surprise you to know that lung cancer claims more lives than breast, colon, and prostate cancers combined. Part of the problem is that lung cancer is often diagnosed late, so there aren't as many treatment options for patients. Now, that may be changing. Doctors are now using powerful radiation beams to zap lung tumors and give patients new hope.

Arthur Koscielnaik knows how lucky he is to be able to share special moments with his children. Arthur was diagnosed with cancer in his right lung. During surgery to remove it, doctors found more problems.

“I went for surgery, they removed it, no problem whatsoever. But they also saw something of a spot on the left side near the heart,” says Koscielnaik.

It turns out that spot was cancer too, and this time surgery was not an option. So Arthur went to Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, where doctors are using powerful radiation to zap tumors that can't be taken out in surgery, especially in cases like his where surgery would be too risky.

“For these patients it's really important to limit the amount of radiation to the non-cancerous lung,” says Chumy Nwogu, MD at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

This is where the high-precision radiation therapy comes in. Doctors can do two months worth of radiation treatments in a matter of hours. But there's a catch. The radiation is so intense and powerful that doctors can only blast the tumor itself. The tumor moves up and down every time the patient takes a breath. However, by using precise image guidance and controlled breathing, doctors can accurately track and attack the tumor. With a recent patient, doctors saw remarkable results.

“He's had 80-90% shrinkage of the original size of the tumor. His performance status, or the way he performs his regular daily activities hasn't changed at all,” says Jorge Gomez, MD at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

This type of therapy is called stereotactic body radiation therapy, and only a handful of hospitals around the country can do it, including Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Experts say it's ideal for patients with small lung tumors who can't have surgery due to other medical conditions.