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Princess Alexandra Hospital first to deliver new technology prostate cancer treatment to Queensland men

A new treatment for prostate cancer at Princess Alexandra Hospital will significantly reduce painful side effects and help maintain sexual function for almost 19,000 Australian men afflicted by the disease each year.

The PA Hospital will provide Queensland men with the first opportunity to undergo this alternative form of radiation therapy as one of only five cancer referral centres across the country.

The primary benefit of the new treatment is the ability of the technology to directly target the intended area after prostate surgery, thereby reducing radiation on the surrounding tissue.

This helps to eliminate side effects of pain and inflammation around the rectum and bladder area and the possibility of reduced sexual function caused by traditional radiation therapy.

The technology is also expected to reduce the time patients spend in hospital.

Evert Klaasen from Gayndah in Queensland's west was one of the first patients to receive the new treatment this week.

"Having radiation therapy can be intimidating at first but all of the great staff and the knowledge that I've got access to the best technology have put my mind at rest," Mr Klaasen said.

"It's fantastic to be part of this new treatment and I feel comfortable knowing that the machine is targeting the exact area, meaning only the area that needs treatment will receive the radiation.

"It's tough being away from home for so long so it will be even better when patients like me don't have to spend weeks away from home."

This targeted treatment is only available since the opening of a new linear accelerator machine at PA Hospital in December 2007, which has already revolutionised the way breast cancer is treated by reducing the need to undergo mastectomy.

The new equipment is upgraded with Image Guided Radiotherapy (IGRT), which involves the production of high-resolution images of the anatomy surrounding a tumour, allowing for more accurate targeting of radiation treatment.

Director of PA Hospital Radiation Oncology Services Assoc Prof Bryan Burmeister said he was pleased that Queensland men now have access to the advanced cancer treatment technology provided by the new equipment.

“The new technology is all about reducing the side effects of treatment,” Dr Burmeister said.

“Until now an X-ray was taken on the linear accelerator machine, so the radiation therapist could see the basic bone structure.

“Image Guided Radiotherapy has the ability to show the soft tissue anatomy and pinpoint radiation treatment exactly where it’s required, so there are almost no side effects,” he said.

Dr Burmeister said the hospital was also investigating the potential of the new treatment being able to condense prostate cancer treatment time, with more intense, targeted radiotherapy over shorter period.

“The standard method of treatment involves daily radiotherapy sessions for six consecutive weeks which means a significant time investment by the patient to come in for treatment, especially for those who live in rural Queensland,” he said.

“Image Guided Radiotherapy has been successful in helping us reduce the number of treatments needed for other cancers and we are trialling its effects on prostate cancer patients.

“PA Hospital’s Radiation Oncology Service provides treatment to more than 200 cancer patients a day. If we are able to significantly shorten the treatment time for one of the most common cancers, we will be able to treat more patients in a shorter period of time.

“The ultimate benefit will be reducing the inconvenience that cancer causes our patients in overcoming the disease,” Dr Burmeister said.

Ends

Available for opportunity: patient for comment, patient on new machinery for mock treatment photography, patient and doctor consult photography, Director of Radiation Oncology to discuss new technology, footage of computer generated images from machine.

For further information:

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