

## **Mercy Cancer Network News Pieces**

### **Saint Mary's First to Use Contura in West Michigan – June 16, 2009**

Saint Mary's introduces new radiation therapy option to West Michigan for the 55 percent of women whose bra sizes are size B or smaller.

Contura, used for the first time in West Michigan at [Saint Mary's Health Care](#), can decrease the length of radiation therapy in breast cancer treatments by several weeks.

A small balloon-like device, Contura is surgically inserted into the patient's breast. The design of Contura is multi-chambered, making it more effective with its ability to send radiation closer to the tumor and farther away from normal tissue. Patients receive radiation treatment twice a day for five days, rather than undergo five to six weeks of radiation with external beam radiation therapy. Once the radiation treatment is complete, Contura is surgically removed.

In the state of Michigan, fewer than 100 patients have undergone this treatment option. Although it's not yet standard practice, more than 5,000 patients nationwide have used Contura as a breast cancer treatment.

Jamie Caughran, MD, breast surgeon, surgically placed the first Contura into a Saint Mary's patient on June 4, 2009.

Gilbert Padula, MD, radiation oncologist, and a medical physicist supervised the radiation therapy treatment given to the patient for the entire following week.

Similar to MammoSite, another balloon-like device that has one chamber, Contura works more effectively for women with bra sizes B or smaller, as its multi-chambered design allows the radiation closer proximity to the tumor. As 55 percent of women are a bra size B or smaller, Contura allows for more women to seek the benefits on internal beam radiation therapy for breast cancer treatment. Women with smaller bra sizes typically do not qualify for MammoSite.

### **The Lacks Cancer Center Studies Effects of Energy Healing on Ovarian Cancer Patients – June 8, 2009**

In addition to caring for patients physically, the Gynecologic Oncology team tends to the mind and spirit by conducting a recent study that involves ovarian cancer patients undergoing treatment. Recently published in the *Journal of Gynecologic Oncology Nursing*, this study focused on the effects of energy healing and relaxation, or Ama Deus, an ancient form of healing used by Indians in the Amazon.

“Kevin Brader, MD, was interested in introducing Ama Deus to our patients, and collaborating with a doctoral student working on her dissertation about Ama Deus, we enrolled interested patients in the seven-week study,” said Michelle Weller, RN, OCN. “Our preliminary findings indicate that Ama Deus works better at relieving their anxiety than other relaxation techniques.”

The Lacks Cancer Center hopes to integrate Ama Deus into the care of all ovarian cancer patients to promote self-healing.

## **High-dose Radiation Therapy for Cervical and Other Gynecologic Malignancies Available at The Lacks Cancer Center at Saint Mary’s – June 8, 2009**

When surgery is not an option, or if additional treatment is needed for gynecologic cancer after surgery, patients at The Lacks Cancer Center at Saint Mary’s can receive high-dose rate brachytherapy radiation.

In the past, low-dose rate brachytherapy has been a standard treatment option for those with cervical or other gynecological cancer and the inclusion of brachytherapy in a treatment plan leads to a doubling of local control rates. A more recent variety of brachytherapy, high-dose brachytherapy, is equally effective in cervical and other gynecologic malignancies and offers significant treatment advantages over the older low-dose rate approach.

Following surgery and five to six weeks of external beam therapy, this method enjoys an 80-90 percent success rate for patients with early stage cervical cancer.

High-dose brachytherapy is an outpatient procedure, where applicators are inserted into the patient in an office setting and iridium pellets are temporarily placed within the applicators.

“High-dose rate treatments take only seven to eight minutes, and nobody else gets radioactive exposure when using high-dose radiation therapy,” says Michael Wilkinson, MD, radiation oncologist. “The process also spares exposure of other adjacent tissue, as only the tumor site is targeted and treated.”

Before high-dose brachytherapy, patients’ only option was low-dose brachytherapy.

“This method involves the use of radioactive cesium, and while undergoing treatment, our patients stay two to three days in the hospital for each treatment, potentially exposing others to radiation,” Wilkinson says.

Depending on its stage, some gynecological cancers may be treated solely through high-dose brachytherapy. This method has been utilized post-operatively to treat endometrial cancer for years at The Lacks Cancer Center.

## **Cancer Program at Saint Mary's Health Care Awarded Three-year Approval With Commendation – May 2009**

Saint Mary's Cancer Program was recently awarded a Three-year Approval with Commendation by the [American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer](#). This is a prestigious award given to less than a third of the 227 Teaching Hospital Cancer Programs throughout the United States.

The commendation was awarded due to superior performance in the areas of outcomes analysis, cancer staging, patient care guidelines, prevention and early detection programs, cancer registry staff education and patient care improvements. This approval reflects the hard work, dedicated effort and inspiration of the many individuals who collectively comprise the cancer care team and who tirelessly strive to ensure that our patients receive the best care possible.

Congratulations to J. Stephen Ebrom, MD, Cancer Committee chair, Tom Gribbin, MD, Kenda Klotz, and Barb DeCoe for their exceptional work.

## **Brader's 300<sup>th</sup> Robotic-assisted Surgery at Saint Mary's Health Care – May 18, 2009**

The Lacks Cancer Center at Saint Mary's boasts one of the nation's most skilled surgeons of the da Vinci Surgical System, Kevin Brader, MD, medical director of Gynecologic Oncology.

On April 14, 2009, Brader performed his 300<sup>th</sup> robotic-assisted surgery.

A noted expert, Brader regularly presents on the da Vinci to other surgeons and health care professionals.

"Dr. Brader has perfected his methodology with the da Vinci," said Michelle Weller, RN, OCN, who works closely with Brader and his patients. "Saint Mary's surgical staff and he have worked together on so many cases, that he can perform a radical hysterectomy in two hours."

With Brader leading the way for robotic-assisted surgery in gynecology, other physicians at Saint Mary's Health Care whose fields are thoracic surgery, benign gynecology, urology and uro-gynecology are also elevating their use of the da Vinci Surgical System. This high usage required the purchase of a second da Vinci Surgical System for Saint Mary's in the fall of 2008.

## **Saint Mary's Health Care Announces Jamie Caughran, MD, as Cancer Liaison Physician – April 2009**

Jamie Caughran, MD, medical director of Comprehensive Breast Center at Saint Mary's, was recently appointed as Cancer Liaison Physician for Saint Mary's. Cancer Liaison Physicians are an integral part of cancer programs accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC). The Commission on Cancer is a consortium of 44 professional organizations dedicated to improving the survival and quality of life for cancer patients.

Caughran is among a national network of more than 1,600 volunteer physicians who provide leadership and direction to establish, maintain and support their facilities' cancer program.

Within this capacity, Caughran will be responsible for spearheading CoC initiatives within the cancer program at Saint Mary's; collaborating with local agencies, such as the American Cancer Society; and facilitating quality improvement initiatives utilizing data submitted to the CoC's National Cancer Database.

To find out more information about the Cancer Liaison Program and the Commission on Cancer, please visit [www.facs.org/cancer](http://www.facs.org/cancer).

## **Saint Mary's Physician Presents Cancer Study in Italy - Makes National News – October 2008**

[Gilbert Padula, MD](#), radiation oncologist at the Lacks Cancer Center at Saint Mary's Health Care, is passionate about his family, his work, and about promoting new ways to treat breast cancer. Recently he combined all three interests: on a vacation to Italy to visit family, Padula used the time as an opportunity to present the latest information on the [MammoSite©](#) Radiation Therapy System, which is a breast radiation treatment that works from the inside, allowing a higher daily dose of radiation used for a shorter period of time, reducing radiation treatments from five to seven weeks to five to seven days. Saint Mary's Health Care is currently the only Michigan hospital which offers MammoSite© treatment in clinical trials.

On August 21, Dr. Padula presented a lecture on MammoSite© to the departments of Surgery, Radiation Oncology, and Medical Oncology at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome. His lecture was simulcast via satellite to other lecture halls around the country and was widely covered in Italian newspapers.

"The topic of MammoSite was very interesting to the audience, and to the Catholic University," reported Padula. "In the region between Rome and Naples,

they have been trying to do partial breast radiation therapy so the lecture was timely.”

Although he speaks Italian, Padula presented in English, in a lecture format with a PowerPoint. News coverage of the lecture included Italian National TV and channel TG3 based in Campobasso, Italy. Two separate newspapers also highlighted Padula’s speech, one with front-page coverage.

Padula has been asked to do an encore lecture, though no date or specifics have been finalized at this point.

“A hope for the future would be collaboration between Catholic University and Saint Mary’s Health Care,” he commented.

### **Saint Mary’s Purchases Second da Vinci Surgical System – October 2008**

As the utilization rate for the first da Vinci Surgical System has been about 85 percent, Saint Mary’s purchased a second device to meet the increasing demand. From April 2007 through August 2008, our surgical staff and surgeons have performed nearly 400 surgeries using the da Vinci.

“Saint Mary’s has had tremendous success with our minimally invasive da Vinci Surgical System, for both urologic and gynecologic–oncology,” said Liz Murphy, RN, vice president and chief nursing officer. “Our patients and physicians have provided us with very positive feedback, and we have had great outcomes.”

Murphy also adds that the addition of the second robot will allow Saint Mary’s to meet the growing requests in benign gynecology, urologic-gynecology and thoracic surgery, allowing us to positively impact the health and lives of more patients.