



Medical Breakthroughs

A New Procedure For Breast Cancer Treatment

(NAPSA)—A new breast cancer treatment based upon applying radiation from the inside-out is growing increasingly popular with patients and their physicians.

Presently, cancerous tumors are often treated with a combination of tumor removal (lumpectomy) followed by external beam radiotherapy to the entire breast.

Although this therapy has proven to be as effective as mastectomy (whole breast removal), it presents a hardship to many women because external radiotherapy involves seven weeks of daily treatments. Many feel this is simply too much time away from home, work, and family.

A breakthrough in breast cancer treatment after lumpectomy that is gaining in popularity is called Accelerated Partial Breast Irradiation (APBI). It involves the insertion of one or several catheters into the lumpectomy site and treating the woman in one week as an outpatient. Most of the radiation is absorbed only a few centimeters from the catheter, which spares the skin, lungs, and healthy breast tissue from unneeded radiation.

Unfortunately, the procedure must be carried out in a heavily shielded treatment room, which is not widely available especially in community hospitals. These treatment rooms can be very expensive for hospitals to construct.

An alternate method of solving this problem is to use a radioactive source which does not require a concrete shielded treatment room. One such source is Ytterbium-169, which has lower energy radiation which can use local shielding around the patient and provides the equivalent dose to the tumor cavity.

When this is used, "patients do not develop nausea or hair loss, which is common with chemother-



A new approach to treating breast cancer using lower doses of radiation may actually help cut down on the number of hospital visits required of patients.

apy," said David Wazer, MD, Professor and Chairman, Departments of Radiation Oncology, Tufts and Brown Universities.

A small public company in Massachusetts, Implant Sciences Corporation (www.implantsciences.com), is presently developing a treatment system using this Ytterbium source and plans to have it FDA-approved and available in hospitals and oncology clinics in about a year.

According to company CEO Anthony J. Armini, Ph.D., "This lower energy radiation source, Ytterbium, which is fabricated by a proprietary technique, may change the current standard of care, by both reducing the high capital costs to the hospital while significantly increasing the number of healthcare centers that can offer breast brachytherapy treatment."

There are no significant negative side effects from this type of radiation treatment given to the breast.

"Most importantly," says Dr. Wazer, "Accelerated Partial Breast Irradiation allows patients to not only beat cancer, but get back to a normal life much sooner."