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ELECTRONIC BRACHYTHERAPY FOR SKIN CANCER

THE PROCEDURE

Electronic brachytherapy is a type of low-energy x-ray treatment for skin cancer. It is a non-invasive alternative to a surgical procedure for the removal of the skin cancer when surgical intervention is not indicated.

The low-energy x-rays are delivered by a FDA approved Xoft Accent brachytherapy unit. These low-energy x-rays are very effective for treating the two most common types of skin cancer: squamous cell carcinoma and basal cell carcinoma.

Treatments are given two (2) times a week for four (4) to five (5) weeks for a total of eight (8) to ten (10) treatments. The total number of treatments will be determined by the Radiation Oncologist (physician specializing in treating cancers with radiation), based on the location of the skin cancer lesion, the size of the skin cancer lesion and the depth of the skin cancer lesion. Entire treatment time including setup is about 20 minutes.

PRIOR TO TREATMENT

- Transportation – you are able to drive yourself, there is no anesthesia required for this procedure, if you do not drive please make arrangements for reliable transportation on treatment days.
- Continue taking your medications – you do not need to stop any medications while receiving these treatments.
- It is extremely important you do not miss any appointments, since you are only receiving both treatments each week. If you have any vacations or appointments that would interfere with your ability to make all the appointments consecutively please notify the doctor or radiation therapist before scheduling your treatments.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

During regular office hours, please call (858) 278-8835 (Option 3)
After hours and on weekends, please call the doctor
or his physician assistant at (619) 318-0952.

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WHAT TO EXPECT & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do you know my cancer is gone?

We observe the area over time and if the cancer does not come back we know that the cancer is gone.

Why do I have to have 8 or 10 treatments?

We know from years of experience that we need to give a certain dose of radiation and that if we gave it all in one treatment your skin and you would not like the results very well, and the outcomes would not be as cosmetically pleasing. The best outcomes are giving the dose twice a week, over four to five weeks.

Will I be radioactive?

No, this is x-ray: as soon as the machine shuts off, there is no more radiation, this is similar to a dental x-ray in terms of energy, and just like the dental x-rays you get, as soon as the machine takes the exposure there is no more radiation. There are no radioactive sources involved with this treatment.

Will the radiation make me sick?

No. This radiation is focused to a very small area, between 10 mm and 50 mm (1cm to 5 cm) or approximately 0.4 inches to 2.0 inches and we are treating to a very superficial depth so you will not be nauseated from this treatment.

Will my hair fall out?

Hair will fall out only in areas where we treat. If there is no hair in that area then you will not lose any hair; however, if we are treating on your scalp for example you would lose the hair in the area we were treating but not on your entire head.

Will the treatments be painful?

No, these treatments are painless, the surface applicator rests on your skin but should not be uncomfortable, if it feels uncomfortable let the radiation therapist know so they can reposition it.

What if I am on blood thinners or other medications, do I need to stop my medications?

No the radiation will not interfere with your medications, but let the physician know what medications you are on if you have a specific concern, and he/she will address that with you.

I have had previous radiation, can I have more radiation?

We will need to know the specifics of where and when you received your previous radiation to make that determination. We need the name of the facility where you received the radiation, when (dates), the name of the doctor who ordered the radiation therapy, and what area of the body where you received the radiation.