

Prone-Breast Radiation Therapy Program at Holy Name Hospital Unique to Bergen County

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Teaneck, NJ - April 1, 2008 - When they learn they need radiation therapy to treat breast cancer, the first question on most women's lips isn't, "How will I be positioned during treatment?" But studies have shown that receiving radiation while lying facedown has benefits for many women, while delivering the same quality outcomes as conventional positioning.

Prone-breast radiation therapy is "a very unique approach," according to Benjamin Rosenbluth, M.D., a radiation oncologist at Holy Name Hospital. It is not widely available outside of only a handful of the larger academic medical centers in the United States.

"Unlike most traditional breast radiation treatments which are given while the patient lies on her back," explains Dr. Rosenbluth, "prone-breast radiation therapy is administered while the patient lies on a specially-designed table with the breast projected downward, isolating only the area targeted for treatment."

At this angle, radiation exposure is minimized to surrounding organs and tissues, such as the heart, lungs, the other breast, ribs and muscles, lowering the risk of related complications. There are also fewer skin-related effects--another advantage for breast radiation patients who can suffer swelling and irritation comparable to mild sunburn.

Dr. Rosenbluth says prone-breast patients at Holy Name may also be candidates for accelerated fractionated therapy, a newer method of radiation delivery, which gives a significantly higher dose over a shorter period of time. While the traditional radiation regime is five-days-a-week for approximately six to 6 ½ weeks, accelerated fractionated radiation patients receive therapy for four to 4 ½ weeks.

According to Charles Vialotti, M.D., the hospital's director of Radiation Oncology, accelerated fractionated therapy (which can be used in prone or supine position) is appealing to many patients for reasons of convenience.

"Women with difficult schedules or logistical issues find that 2 ½ fewer weeks of treatment time can have a positive impact on their quality of life without sacrificing treatment outcomes," he says.

Although prone-breast radiation therapy is applicable to a wide range of patients, like any therapy, it can't be used universally. For example, inability to assume the treatment position

(often due to significant arthritis), an individual's particular internal organ structure and certain tumor locations may not enable a patient to be treated in the prone position.