



ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON
MEDICAL SCHOOL

University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey



Contact: Michele Fisher
Media Relations Specialist
732/235-9872
fisherm2@umdnj.edu

Researchers Focus on Targeted Radiation for Pancreatic Cancer Tumors

Newly Opened Clinical Trial at CINJ Looks at Advanced Treatment that Preserves Healthy Tissue

New Brunswick, N.J., May 12, 2009 – According to the American Cancer Society, pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cancer killer in the country, with more than 42,000 new cases expected to be diagnosed this year and more than 35,000 deaths. In New Jersey alone, 1,000 deaths are estimated from the disease, which only has a five-year, five-percent survival rate. That is why researchers at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) have launched a new clinical trial, which aims to determine the effectiveness of an advanced radiation therapy technique on those with pancreatic cancer. CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Radiation therapy involves using a beam of high-energy particles or waves such as x-rays to destroy or damage cancer cells. In this study, researchers through the Department of Radiation Oncology at CINJ and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital will use a treatment called Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT), which is considered a more sophisticated delivery technique that can increase the amount of radiation to the pancreatic tumor while keeping the dose to normal organs at a safe level. This is done through multiple computer-controlled radiation beams. In this trial, the amount of radiation to the tumor site will be gradually increased throughout the treatment period to determine the maximum safe dosage.

Salma Jabbour, MD, who is a radiation oncologist at CINJ and an assistant professor of radiation oncology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the lead investigator of the study. She notes IMRT can afford a patient an improved quality of life, “By being able to provide a specified amount of radiation to a targeted area, we will be able to preserve more healthy tissue and reduce side effects that may cause interruptions in the treatment cycle.”

Selected patients will undergo various testing before and during treatment, including x-rays, blood work and physical exams. For most of the six-month treatment period, participants will receive a combination of both IMRT and chemotherapy. Regular follow-up visits would be required for at least the first two years.

Patients at or above age 18 with the diagnosis of locally advanced pancreatic cancer (pancreatic cancer that has not spread to the lungs or liver) that cannot be operated on are eligible to take part in the trial, although other criteria must be met. The study is part of the CINJ Oncology Group (CINJOG), which is comprised of physicians throughout New Jersey from the CINJ Network of hospitals. For additional information on how to participate, individuals should call 732-235-7251.

Clinical trials, often called cancer research studies, test new treatments and new ways of using existing treatments for cancer. At CINJ, researchers use these studies to answer questions about how a treatment affects the human body and to make sure it is safe and effective. There are several types of clinical trials that are currently underway at CINJ, including those that diagnose, treat, prevent, and manage symptoms of cancer. Many treatments used today -- whether it is drugs or vaccines; ways to do surgery or give radiation therapy; or combinations of treatments -- are the results of past clinical trials.

As New Jersey’s only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, CINJ provides

patients with access to treatment options not available at other institutions within the state. CINJ currently enrolls more than 1,000 patients on clinical trials, including approximately 15 percent of all new adult cancer patients and approximately 70 percent of all pediatric cancer patients. Enrollment in clinical trials nationwide is fewer than five percent of all adult cancer patients.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (www.cinj.org) is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ's physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice, quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Flagship Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Major Clinical Research Affiliate Hospitals: Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Hospital, Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, JFK Medical Center, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ at Hamilton), Saint Peter's University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. *Academic Affiliate

###