

New Technique Zaps Prostate Cancer With Sound

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Tulane University School of Medicine urologist Dr. Benjamin R. Lee is conducting a clinical trial of a new technique to remove prostate cancer without any incisions in patients whose cancer has returned following radiation treatment.

The treatment, called High Intensity Focused Ultrasound, or HIFU, uses ultrasound energy, or sound waves, to rapidly heat up tissue to destroy the cancer cells. The energy is directed via an ultrasound probe through the rectal wall, with no incisions through the body, similar to how kidney stones are treated.

Ultrasound energy is focused at a specific location and, at that focal point, the temperature rises to almost 194 degrees Fahrenheit in a matter of seconds. Any tissue at the focal point is destroyed, leaving outside tissue unharmed.

"This is an exciting new treatment option for men with recurrent prostate cancer," says Dr. Lee, fellowship director of robotics, laparoscopy and endourology for Tulane Medical Center. "Typically, surgery for prostate cancer after radiation has a higher risk for side effects since the radiation affects the tissue's ability to heal."

Tulane is participating in a 15-site clinical trial for the HIFU technique along with University of California at Los Angeles, MD Anderson and New York University. Dr. Lee is the principal investigator for Tulane's portion of the study. Doctors are looking to determine whether the new therapy is more effective in eliminating the cancer with fewer side effects than traditional techniques. Risks from traditional surgery after radiation include delayed wound healing, incontinence, rectal injury and erectile dysfunction.

Prostate cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in men, taking the lives of 30,000 men in the U.S. each year, according to the American Cancer Society. For more information about HIFU, patients can visit MyProstateCancer.com

or call the Tulane University Department of Urology at (504) 988-5271.