



Tuesday January 2, 2018

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ONCOLOGY UPDATE in South Florida

ONCOLOGY UPDATE IN SOUTH FLORIDA: Innovations and Innovators

Most of the cancers that catch the attention of the media and make headlines include the breast, colon and lung. These cancers seem to have new innovations that improve survival rates and treatment every day. What about other less publicized cancers? In particular, Liver cancer incidence has more than tripled since the 1980s. Death rates in liver cancer have increased by almost 3 percent per year since 2000, rather than decrease like the other fore mentioned cancers. So, why don't you hear more about it? What's new with liver cancer, other than the increase in prevalence? What can be done about it?

Although on the rise, there are several new innovations and advances in the treatment of liver cancer. Liver cancer is mainly caused by cirrhosis of the liver, either from heavy alcohol usage, fatty liver disease or hepatitis. With the recent introduction of Harvoni, and other anti-viral medications like it, Hepatitis C is now a curable illness and, if treated early enough, can help prevent cirrhosis and ultimately the development of liver cancer.

Prior to the 1990s and even early in the 21st Century, the surgical management of liver tumors included a large operation or even transplant, but nowadays, liver



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tumors can be treated with minimally invasive techniques that involve microwave ablation equipment and ultrasound techniques. Unlike the extensive hospital stays and large scars that went along with open surgery in the past, patients undergoing laparoscopic or robotic surgery ablations spend only a night or two in the hospital with minimal blood loss and small 5mm incisions. The microwave ablation technique also allows for patients with cirrhosis who otherwise would not be a candidate for liver surgery, to receive treatment for liver cancer.

In addition to ablation techniques and anti-viral medications, techniques done with interventional radiology can also be performed to prolong survival and help treat liver cancer. These techniques include Y90 and transarterial chemoembolization, which allows for direct deliverance of cancer killing medications to the specific site of the tumor. These procedures can often be done in outpatient settings and amplify the treatment when performed in conjunction with other surgery and chemotherapy.

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