Men's Health Update

Proton Therapy Offers Precision Treatment And Fewer Side Effects For Prostate Cancer Patients

(NAPSA)—Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in men in the U.S., but if detected early, it has a five-year survival rate of nearly 99 percent. While surgery and radiation therapy may have similar outcomes for early-stage prostate cancer, radiation therapy is the primary option for locally advanced prostate cancer and can also be used for localized prostate cancer.

When deciding on a treatment route, the best option is the one that most effectively treats the tumor and spares surrounding healthy tissue and organs, which reduces the risk of side effects. All of this can be accomplished with proton therapy, a treatment option available at the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center.

Proton therapy is an advanced type of radiation treatment that uses a beam of protons to deliver radiation directly to the tumor, destroying cancer cells while sparing surrounding healthy tissue and vital organs. It is because of the precision of proton radiation and its ability to reduce the risk of short- and long-term side effects that Arkansas resident Terry Lavy decided to come to Houston, Texas to undergo proton therapy treatment at MD Anderson.

Terry, a 72-year-old retired University of Arkansas professor, received an alarming phone call from his urologist in March 2008; he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

"My first reaction was shock and disbelief," Terry said.

He sat down with his local urologist to discuss his treatment options, but before making a decision, Terry decided to talk it over with his friends and family. During this time he spoke to a family friend, who had just received proton therapy at the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center in Houston.

Nearly 12 million Americans fight cancer each year. Terry Lavy's cancer is in remission after proton radiation treatments.

"I was anxious about having surgery and the side effects of the treatment options I had discussed with my doctor," he said. "But, when my friend told me proton therapy is noninvasive, has fewer side effects and works just as well as other radiation options with no hospitalization, I knew this was the route I wanted to go."

Immediately, Terry called MD Anderson to inquire about proton therapy and scheduled an appointment. In July of 2008, Terry and his wife temporarily relocated to Houston.

Terry received proton radiation five days a week for a total of 38 treatments over a two-month period. After his last session, he rang the ceremonial gong symbolizing the end of his cancer treatment. He said he was most impressed with how easy his treatment was.

Terry's physician, Seungtaek Choi, M.D., an assistant professor of radiation oncology, noted that "proton therapy was an excellent treatment choice for Terry's cancer because the reduced risk of side effects would allow him to continue his life and enjoy his pastime of fishing and spending time with his grandchildren." He also said that "Terry is doing well and hasn't experienced adverse side effects."

"I never felt any pain, weakness or other physical effects from the treatment," Terry said. "The lack of fatigue is evident because one cannot differentiate between those patients receiving their first treatment or their 38th. Some people received treatment while still working a full-time job and others regularly played 18 holes of golf after each treatment. We all felt fine."

Now, more than three years after he completed treatment, Terry is feeling great and his checkups show no evidence of disease. Since receiving proton therapy, Terry has made it his duty to share his story and tell other prostate cancer patients about the option of proton treatment. Over the years, he has referred over 20 people for proton therapy treatment.

"I am so fortunate to have heard about proton therapy, so now I want to be sure to pass my knowledge and experience on to others," he said. "I'm convinced proton radiation is the way to go for men facing prostate cancer."

For more information about the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center, visit www.MDAndersonProton.com or call (866) 632-4PTC (4782).