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Radiation oncology improves care with brachytherapy

Interstitial brachytherapy and remote afterloading technology, now performed by the IU Department of Radiation Oncology, offer improved treatment to patients with difficult or complex gynecological cancers. Brachytherapy is radiotherapeutic treatment applied with the X-ray source near the tissues being irradiated.

Radioactive implants have the advantage of delivering a higher dose of radiation directly to the tumor than would be possible with external beam radiation while minimizing the radiation exposure of the surrounding tissues. According to **Shailaja Reddy, MD**, a specialist in gynecologic radiation oncology, brachytherapy has proven particularly useful in treating many gynecologic cancers.

Collaborating with IU's gynecologic oncologists, the Department of Radiation Oncology uses ultrasound guidance and laparoscopy during the placement of the interstitial implants. This increases the accuracy of the placement and helps avoid potential problems such as perforation or bowel damage.

Uterine or vaginal intracavity implants, commonly called Fletcher Suit implants, are offered in many community settings. IU radiation oncologists extend this care by providing more specialized kinds of radiological implants for patients with complex or rare cancers. Interstitial brachytherapy, in which tiny radioactive pellets are placed inside the body via a catheter, is one specialized technique that may benefit these patients and is most often used for vaginal, cervical, and some urethral tumors.

As a referral practice, the Department of Radiation Oncology sees more rare cancers and more complicated cases. Treatment of primary vaginal cancers, which are rare to begin with, is further complicated by previous irradiation, recurrences of disease and anatomical distortion caused by the disease. Complicated cases such as these may benefit from the specialized techniques offered at IU. These techniques are enhanced by several technologies available at the IU Cancer Center, as well as its interdisciplinary approach to treatment.

Another technology that leads to improvements in treatment safety and patient comfort is a sophisticated device called the remote afterloader, notes **Marcus Randall, MD**, chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology, who is an international authority in gynecologic radiation oncology. He hales the new technique as a "welcome advance in implant treatment."

The low-dose-rate remote afterloading system directly improves patient care by eliminating caregiver exposure to radiation. The remote afterloader is mobile and safely encloses the sources and transfer apparatus.

Caregivers use remote controls to operate and monitor the unit. A switch on the door to the room ensures that sources are automatically withdrawn in the event that someone enters the room by mistake.

BRIEFS

Free screenings

Free screenings for anxiety disorders will be conducted from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday, May 6, in the Indiana University Hospital Adult Outpatient Psychiatry Clinic, room 3124. Appointments are not necessary.

Screenings will consist of a written self-test for anxiety and a brief screening interview with a mental health professional. Educational information also will be available. The entire screening takes about 30 minutes.

For additional information, call 274-7422.

New Program

The Wells Center for Pediatric Research and the Krannert Institute of Cardiology have joined forces to develop a joint program in cardiovascular development biology.

Loren Field, PhD, currently a faculty member at the Krannert Institute, will lead this new program.

Dr. Field, while maintaining his efforts in cardiology, will relocate that portion of his own research program in developmental biology into the Wells Center and further develop this program in conjunction with new faculty recruitment in pediatrics.

Don't forget to get your identification badge for IUSM

Distribution of the new IUSM identification badges at the Ruth Lilly Medical Library will continue through Friday, April 24.

The new badges will serve as the only identification needed by IUSM personnel and will provide access to Clarian hospitals.

To obtain a badge at the library, make sure to have a photo ID when you arrive at the first floor station. Hours for the week of April 20 are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday and Wednesday: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday; noon to 8 p.m. Thursday, and 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.

For additional information, call 274-5177 or visit the library web site at <http://www.medlib.iupui.edu/iusm/oncard.html>.

Honors

Richard Gunderman, MD, PhD, assistant professor of radiology, was awarded one of three research fellowships from General Electric Medical Systems and the Association of University Radiologists (GE-AUR). The GE-AUR Radiology Research Academic Fellowships are granted to young radiology investigators to conduct research on how diagnostic imaging can improve patient care outcomes. Dr. Gunderman's research project is entitled "The Quality of Reporting in Pediatric Radiology." He will study how to improve radiology reporting so that communication between radiologists and referring physicians is enhanced.

Antoinette Hood, MD, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine and of dermatology, has received the Rose Hirschler Award, presented annually by the Women's Dermatologic Society. The award is the highest honor given by the society and is named in recognition of the first known female dermatologist in the U.S. The award was presented at the 56th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology. Dr. Hood had served as vice president of the organization during the past year.

David Williams, MD, director of the Herman B Wells Center for Pediatric Research, has been named a member of the five-member scientific advisory board for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Dr. Williams also has been named secretary/ treasurer of the American Society of Clinical Investigation.

Mary Dinauer, MD, PhD, associate professor of pediatrics and of medical and molecular genetics, has been named a counselor of the American Society of Clinical Investigation.

Stephen Allen, MD, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine and director of clinical microbiology, is president-elect of the Binford-Dammin Society of Infectious Disease Pathologists.

An entertaining success -- EOTA

Nearly 300 people were serenaded, jazzed up, and danced around during the seventh annual Evening of the Arts performance April 8 at the University Place Conference Center auditorium.

This year's performing and visual arts showcase featuring the artistic talents of students, residents, faculty and staff grossed \$6,800 for the EOTA Fund. That's about \$1,200 more than the 1997 show raised for distribution to five homeless clinics staffed by medical students.

Those in attendance were entertained primarily by students with performances ranging from a 12-piece jazz ensemble to an East Indian classical dance number. Numerous vocalists and musicians rounded out the evening's entertainment.

Master of ceremonies was **Phil Nguyen, MS IV**, who also performed a Vietnamese karaoke song.

Chairing the event were **Chris Wood, MS III, Stefanie Flora, MS III, and Matthew Priddy, MS II**.

<http://www.medicine.indiana.edu>