



NEWS RELEASE

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Banner Boswell Medical Center offers new treatment for liver cancer

SUN CITY, Ariz. (May 23, 2012) – When Sun City resident Kathie Kukla was diagnosed in 2011 with neuroendocrine cancer – the same cancer that killed her sister 20 years ago – she thought it was a death sentence. But a new treatment at Banner Boswell Medical Center in Sun City is giving her hope and has already shown progress in killing the tumors invading her liver.

Kukla, 65, is the first patient at the non-profit hospital to receive radioembolization. The treatment involves implanting tiny resin spheres filled with Yttrium-90 (Y-90) into the arteries supplying the liver tumors with blood. The Y-90 is delivered to these arteries through a minimally invasive catheter. This approach spares healthy tissue and other parts of the body. Radioembolization is a viable treatment for qualified patients who haven't responded well to other therapies or who are not candidates for other treatments, including surgery or liver transplantation.

"Cancers which spread to the liver are a varied group and many types respond well to Y-90," said Gordon Haugland, MD, one of the interventional radiologists performing the procedure at Banner Boswell. Interventional radiologist Pat Ramachandran, MD, also performs the procedure at Banner Boswell and was instrumental in bringing the option to patients at the Northwest Valley hospital.

"With the addition of radioembolization, Banner Boswell offers the full spectrum of interventional oncology treatments, from freezing tumors (cryoablation) and heating tumors (radiofrequency ablation) to delivering chemotherapy directly to the liver tumors (chemoembolization)," Dr. Haugland added. "Our oncologists determine the best treatment plan for each patient and we assist when possible with the goal of improving survival and maintaining quality of life."

During the outpatient procedure, patients are lightly sedated while a small catheter is placed in the femoral artery in the groin. Using X-ray guidance, the interventional radiologist advances the catheter to the hepatic (liver) artery. The Y-90 microspheres are then delivered to the liver and float to the tumors via the blood supply. The spheres deliver radiation directly to the tumors for about a week, with the maximal effect occurring about three months after treatment.

Radioembolization is generally well-tolerated with most patients experiencing only mild symptoms after treatment.

"Y-90 is not a substitute for chemotherapy, but offers an adjunct to control metastatic disease to the liver," Dr. Haugland emphasized. "It's exciting to be able to present oncologists with another weapon in their arsenal to help patients fight cancer."

For Kukla, the treatment so far has been well-tolerated and has halted her disease progression. "Originally, they told me the tumors were too numerous to count. Now there are no new tumors, no new growth, and the measurement of the tumors has decreased," she said.

Kukla's treatment response and the outpatient nature of treatment allow her to maintain her active lifestyle. She plays golf four times a week, recently joined a gym and is involved with several clubs and other activities. "It's absolutely phenomenal. I know this cancer cannot be cured, but it can be managed so I can live a long life," Kukla added.

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Banner Boswell is just one of a handful of hospitals in the Valley offering radioembolization, including Banner Good Samaritan and Banner Desert medical centers.

Patients are encouraged to speak with their oncologist to determine if radioembolization is right for them. For more information about Banner Boswell's oncology services, visit www.bannerhealth.com/boswell.

Banner Boswell Medical Center, located at 10401 W. Thunderbird Blvd. in Sun City, is a 501-bed campus specializing in neurosciences, heart care, cancer care, stroke care, orthopedics, acute rehabilitation, skilled nursing and emergency care. Supporting Banner Boswell's mission of excellent patient care is the Sun Health Foundation, which encourages charitable giving to support the hospital. Banner Boswell is part of nonprofit Banner Health. For more information, visit www.BannerHealth.com/Boswell.

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