

UCSD's Moores Cancer Center First in California To Offer SAVI, Advanced Breast Cancer Treatment

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SAVI Device

The Moores Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) is the first facility in California - and the second in the nation - to offer the SAVI applicator, an advanced treatment for breast cancer as part of breast conservation therapy.

Catheryn Yashar, M.D., assistant professor and chief of Breast and Gynecological Services in the UCSD Department of Radiation Oncology, has begun offering SAVI to some of the center's breast cancer patients. The new SAVI device can provide advantages for women with early-stage breast cancer.

SAVI is a single-entry, multi-catheter applicator that delivers partial breast irradiation. By delivering a more precisely targeted dose of radiation, SAVI treats the tissue surrounding the lumpectomy cavity while minimizing radiation to healthy tissue.

Breast conservation therapy includes lumpectomy - the surgical removal of the cancerous tissue within the breast plus tissue immediately around the tumor - followed by radiation. Radiation treatment after a lumpectomy has traditionally involved irradiation of the entire breast. Whole breast irradiation exposes more healthy tissue and involves a lengthy treatment course, with radiation delivered five times a week over a 6-7 week period.

SAVI delivers a form of radiation therapy known as breast brachytherapy, which targets the tumor site from inside the breast. This approach is becoming a more widely used alternative to external-beam radiation, and typically involves two treatments per day for only five days.

Among its benefits, the SAVI device's multi-catheter design provides greater flexibility in delivering radiation, which may reduce radiation damage to the skin or chest wall.

The applicator is an expandable bundle of catheters, which the physician inserts in its collapsed position into the lumpectomy cavity through a small incision in the breast. The catheter bundle is then expanded, allowing the device to conform to the shape of the cavity.

"The SAVI device impressed us with its ability to modulate the radiation dose based on patient anatomy," said Yashar. "This is an advantage over other techniques because it allows us to minimize radiation to healthy tissue. Because it can more precisely target the therapy, SAVI extends the benefits of brachytherapy to a larger group of women and is appropriate for many patients, including those who may not be candidates for other types of brachytherapy."

The SAVI technology was developed by BioLucent, Inc., (Aliso Viejo, Calif.) a women's health company dedicated to the early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

The Rebecca and John Moores UCSD Cancer Center is located at the University of California, San Diego. Founded in 1979, the Cancer Center is one of just 39 centers in the United States to hold a National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation as a Comprehensive Cancer Center. As such, it ranks among the top centers in the nation conducting basic and clinical cancer research, providing advanced patient care and serving the community through outreach and education programs.

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