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World-first Australian prostate cancer trial will harness new technology to dramatically reduce treatment time for men

Australian researchers have launched the TROG 15.01 SPARK clinical trial, which will use revolutionary KIM technology to improve targeting accuracy for patients undergoing radiotherapy for prostate cancer - cutting treatment time from 40 visits to just five.

The SPARK trial, coordinated by TROG Cancer Research, studies an Australian-developed technology, Kilovoltage Intrafraction Monitoring (KIM), which assesses the position of the cancer in real-time, and enables the treatment team to redirect the radiation beam if the cancer moves even by a few millimetres.

A standard course of radiotherapy for prostate cancer involves treatment five times a week for around eight weeks. Although the side effects are generally mild, the length of the regimen can be difficult for some men to manage.

Steve McCluskey is one of the first people in the world who will access the novel KIM treatment at Calvary Mater Newcastle. He decided to join the SPARK trial after being recently diagnosed with prostate cancer and said the reduced number of hospital visits will make life a lot easier.

“I am a great believer in new technology and I loved the idea of only having five visits with minimal chances of major side effects. I cannot wait to get the treatment behind me as quickly as possible and get on with my life,” Steve said.

Trial Co-Chair, Professor Paul Keall, said the innovative technology has the potential to be transformative for men with early stage prostate cancer, significantly decreasing their treatment time.

“The KIM technology will enable safer radiation dose intensification, and therefore the SPARK trial cancer patients will be treated in five treatment sessions over two weeks,” he said.

“Potential patients are enthusiastic about the increased accuracy and the shorter treatment time. There are economic benefits to shorter treatment times also, reducing hospital workload and costs as well as the time off work and transport for patients and their families.

“KIM is a technology being developed and pioneered in Australia, and is applicable to other cancers affected by motion, including lung, liver, kidney and pancreas cancers. This Australian technology could become the global standard of care for many cancer patients.”

Associate Professor Jarad Martin is the clinical Co-Chair of SPARK, and is excited to be able to offer this promising treatment option for men in Newcastle and beyond.

“Radiotherapy is already a safe and effective treatment option for men with prostate cancer. SPARK is another step in us exploring novel ways to make a good treatment even better,” he said.

SPARK will recruit 48 patients around Australia and researchers expect the efficacy of the KIM technology to be known in late 2017. The trial is coordinated by TROG Cancer Research, co-funded Cancer Australia and the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and sponsored by the University of Sydney.

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