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## Cancer Treatment for Any Size

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Ivanhoe Newswire) -- It's one of the most common kinds of cancer -- one in six men will hear "you have prostate cancer" in their lifetimes. Doctors say it can be a very treatable disease if caught early. Until now, size was an issue for some of the most high-tech treatments, but doctors found a way to make proton therapy an option for just about everyone.

Ever since his college football days, Gene Hagerman has been a big guy.

"Obese they call us, but I think of us as large people," Hagerman told Ivanhoe.

When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, his size got in the way of the treatment he needed. At nearly 400 pounds with 63-inch hips, proton therapy wasn't an option.

"They were screening people based on size of hips," Hagerman said. "Obviously, my height and weight eliminated me."



The therapy uses proton beams to kill cancer cells. Compared to radiation, it's more precise and has fewer side effects. But there were limits on how far the beam would penetrate into the body ... until now.

In the past, the beam scattered the protons, which limited how far they could travel in the body. Using a technique called uniform scanning, doctors direct a sharper proton beam into the body. It penetrates deeper with better accuracy.

"With the uniform scanning, we can pretty much treat all the prostate patients that come," Zuofeng Li, D.Sc., Physics Director at the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute in Jacksonville, Fla., told Ivanhoe.

After eight weeks of treatment, Hagerman's tumor shrank by half.

"When I left, my PSA level dropped from 6.8 to 3.8," Hagerman said.

He's staying active and is grateful his cancer treatment didn't discriminate.

"It's really important for people who are my size, men who need this treatment, to have it available to them," Hagerman said.

Uniform scanning is also an option for patients with large tumors that are close to vital organs. Along with prostate cancer, doctors hope to soon use it for brain, spine, and head and neck tumors.



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