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Cancer patient receives first proton therapy treatment at University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – A Cocoa Beach man with prostate cancer today (Aug. 14) became the first patient to undergo treatment at the new [University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute](#), the first time the most advanced form of radiation therapy available has been offered in the Southeast.

“The first day a patient begins cancer treatment carries a great deal of significance for the patient, his or her family and the physicians, physicists, nurses, technicians and others members of the teams who deliver care,” said Dr. Nancy Mendenhall, the UF Proton Therapy Institute’s medical director. “In this case, it also happens to mark a significant milestone for the University of Florida, Jacksonville and cancer patients throughout the Southeast. Cancer patients now have access to a type of radiation therapy we believe will increase both the chance of cure and the chance of avoiding treatment-related side effects for many malignancies.”

The 54-year-old patient will receive daily proton therapy for the next four to six weeks. Each treatment lasts less than three minutes, though each visit may take up to 40 minutes to accurately position and prepare him.

“After thorough evaluation of other treatment options, proton therapy was felt to be the best choice in this patient. While proton therapy is not right for every patient, it has a high rate of success in curing prostate cancer with minimal side effects. Thus far, the results reported for cancers in children and in cancers of the brain, lung, head and neck, eye, cervix, gastrointestinal tract, bones and soft tissues look extremely promising,” said Mendenhall.

Only one of four treatment rooms in the 98,000-square-foot, \$125 million facility is now in use, so a

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limited number of patients will be treated during the first few months of operation. Patient volume will increase gradually as each treatment room is brought online; the second is projected to come online within six months. All four treatment rooms are expected to be in operation, treating up to 150 patients per day, by 2008.

Protons differ from X-rays commonly used in conventional radiation. X-rays enter the body at a high energy level, travel through the body to the tumor, and then exit the body on the other side, exposing all tissue in their path to damaging radiation. In contrast, protons enter the body at a low energy level and release most of their energy upon impact with the tumor, so there is no “exit” dosage of radiation to healthy tissue. This results in a low incidence of side effects and, especially in children, fewer long-term effects.

Florida Proton, www.floridaproton.org, is one of only five proton therapy centers in the country and is affiliated with the UF College of Medicine and UF Shands Cancer Center, a national leader in cancer treatment and research.

“We are determined to offer patients in Florida and the Southeast the best possible treatment options, whether it be proton therapy, conventional radiation therapy, surgery or chemotherapy. We do believe that protons will occupy a very important place among the armamentarium of cancer weapons. We are also poised to become a center for both clinical and basic research that will increase our understanding of basic disease processes and improve cancer treatments,” said Mendenhall. “Our mission is to deliver the best treatment possible to our patients today and to create the knowledge that will make the treatments of tomorrow even better.”

Proton therapy has been used to treat cancer for decades in a limited number of treatment centers worldwide; an estimated 40,000 people worldwide have received proton therapy. Recent advances in imaging technology that enable radiation oncologists to see exactly the size, shape and depth of a tumor make proton therapy a suitable treatment option for a greater number of cancer patients.

“The successful treatment of our first patient today is a result of many years of planning, development and training by some of the brightest minds in the field of radiation oncology,” said Stuart Klein, Florida Proton’s executive director. “This tremendous team includes UF faculty and IBA, the world’s

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leading proton therapy system designer and manufacturer. We are proud to bring this level of expertise to our patients and their families.”

IBA is the international leader in particle therapy, acknowledged to be the most precise and effective clinical radiotherapy method in the selective destruction of cancer cells. “We are very excited to be part of the success of this first proton therapy treatment at the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute. Never in the history of medicine has such a complex and advanced therapy system been put in operation so swiftly. This new record is important for proton therapy, as it will contribute to make the technology shift from research to clinical reality. The passion, rigor and care that the whole UFPTI staff has shown to make this happen is admirable,” said Pierre Mottet, IBA’s managing director and chief executive officer. “And this is just the beginning of a long term partnership for the advance of proton therapy and better patient care in the Southeast.”

University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization affiliated with the UF College of Medicine. It is located at 2015 N. Jefferson St. in Jacksonville, near Shands Jacksonville. Information about Florida Proton is available at www.floridaproton.org or by calling toll-free 877-686-6009.

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IBA Description:

IBA delivers efficient, dependable solutions of unique precision in the fields of cancer diagnosis and therapy. The company also offers sterilization and ionization solutions to improve the hygiene and safety of everyday life. IBA is listed on the pan-European stock exchange EURONEXT, is integrated into the NextEconomy market segment and belongs to BelSmall index. Site: www.iba-worldwide.com.

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