

# Hyperthermia adds more options

Heat makes treatment more effective **By William Wilburn**



Hyperthermia allowed Caryn Rosenberg to continue radiation treatments for breast cancer with lung metastasis.

**FIVE YEARS AFTER** Caryn Rosenberg's breast cancer had been treated with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, the disease struck back. Instead of affecting the breast, however, the cancer appeared in her lungs and axillary lymph

nodes, which are in the underarm. She had already been treated with radiation so doctors normally would have ruled out that treatment option because radiation exposures can accumulate to harmful levels over time. But by adding

hyperthermia to her radiation treatments, Caryn was able to closely target the radiation and continue with that course of treatment.

“Every place I went to — and I went to four major hospitals — talked only about trying to keep the cancer at bay with chemotherapy,” Caryn said. “Nobody discussed trying to eliminate it, and no one suggested radiation for the recurrence to the axilla. Basically, they all said to me, ‘Well you already had radiation treatment, so you had your lifetime fill.’”

“The doctors at Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA) in Philadelphia said, ‘We have the knowledge and equipment to enable us to target the tumor so well you won’t be re-irradiated in the places you already have been.’ They explained that, as long as the cancers are relatively close to the skin, hyperthermia treatment could improve the radiation treatment. They were able to target to my axillary lymph nodes only.”

### Heat allows less-intense treatments

Hyperthermia therapy involves heating the tissue where the tumor resides to a temperature of 106 degrees, about the temperature of a hot tub. The elevated temperature increases blood flow to the tumor and makes other treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation, more effective. Hyperthermia is approved by the Food and Drug Administration and covered by medical insurance.

In Caryn’s case, pinpointing and enhancing the radiation treatment meant a lower dose of radiation could be used.

CTCA medical oncologist Petra Ketterl, MD, explains that when patients treated with radiation reach a point of critical toxicity in the surrounding tissue, it reduces the amount of additional

radiation that can be administered. “If you can’t give an adequate amount of radiation, you don’t even start. But if you can give a lower dose of radiation with hyperthermia and get the same effect, you can still treat with radiation.”

### What are treatments like?

“I received radiation twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon, about six hours apart every weekday for three weeks,” Caryn said. “I was getting the same amount of radiation anybody would get if they went once a day, but I got it in half treatments.” The theory is that nor-

mal cells would be able to recuperate from the dose of radiation quicker than cancer cells. So if Caryn received a half portion in the morning, by the afternoon, her normal cells would have recovered while the cancer cells were still reeling. Then they would zap the cancer again.

and worked up to an hour. “Sometimes I would sleep,” she said. “They would play really nice music. Once, I realized I had my cell phone in my pocketbook next to me, and I started making phone calls. You know, just hung out.”

Caryn also avails herself of complementary treatments. “Basically, I’m trying to take everything available to me. I meet with nutritionists and the naturopathic doctors. I also have regular Reiki treatments [during which a therapist uses touch to channel energies into a patient to promote healing], acupuncture and massage. I’m a big fan of both Reiki and acupuncture.

---

**Hyperthermia therapy involves heating the tissue where the tumor resides to a temperature of 106 degrees, about the temperature of a hot tub. The elevated temperature increases blood flow to the tumor and makes other treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation, more effective.**

---

mal cells would be able to recuperate from the dose of radiation quicker than cancer cells. So if Caryn received a half portion in the morning, by the afternoon, her normal cells would have recovered while the cancer cells were still reeling. Then they would zap the cancer again.

Caryn’s treatments were not particularly difficult. On the days Caryn received the hyperthermia treatment, she came back an hour before the second dose of radiation. She would lie on her side and position her arm over her head or around her back so the technician could place a water-filled bolus in the pit of her arm. The bolus is a balloon that fits between the patient and the device that heats the targeted tissues. Treatments started at half an hour

“I know so many people who are going to other places and, like me, they believe in a comprehensive therapy, not just conventional. But they’re running from pillar to post. They go to their doctor and then they have to hope their doctor works with the naturopath. Sometimes they don’t, and the patient feels like they have to referee. At CTCA, it’s not like that. I know my oncologist reviews the same records that my naturopath does, and they work together.

“So to be able to go to one place and to be able to say, ‘Today I’ll meet with my doctor and I’ll have Reiki and I’ll have acupuncture. When I have my infusion, I’ll listen to soothing music on the C.A.R.E. Channel®.’ It all goes to healing.” **CFThrive**