

## **IORT: Battling Breast Cancer on New Ground**

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When Helen Crosskey was diagnosed with breast cancer, she knew she wasn't going to be able to sit around the house and patiently wait for things to get better on their own. Instead, she got busy figuring out what to do. "Cancer does not make a good playmate; it's spreading while you're ignoring it," said Crosskey. When she went to Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA), Crosskey learned that she was a candidate for a type of radiation new to the center.

The Intraoperative Radiation Therapy (IORT) Novac7 technology allows patients to receive radiation treatment, delivered with the same power and precision as other advanced radiation techniques, while still in the operating room undergoing surgery, often without any additional outpatient radiation treatment visits and with fewer side effects. IORT can also offer patients better cosmetic results and improved quality of life as the need for additional radiation treatment may be minimized or eliminated altogether.

Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) in Tulsa and Philadelphia are the only hospitals in the nation that offer the Novac7, which was brought to the US from Rome, Italy. Though new, this technology has unique benefits.

"In the case of breast cancer, IORT is the application of radiation directly to the tissue that needs it, without any other organs getting in the way" said John Frame, MD, breast surgeon for Cancer Treatment Centers of America. "Once the machine is in place during the operation, the radiation is delivered in the operating room, by the radiation oncologist and physicists, for the prescribed amount of time and dosage. The preparation and the delivery adds just a few minutes to the operation, and the wound is closed normally."

Overall, adding IORT to a breast surgery such as a lumpectomy does not drastically change the time or preparation. There are slight differences in the way the tissue is prepared, but after completing the procedure there is no visible trace of the radiation.

One of the advantages of IORT is that it can destroy microscopic tumor cells left behind by surgery before the cells have a chance to divide or migrate to other areas of the body. In addition, the treatment and recovery can be much quicker. Additionally, the radiation is applied directly to possibly affected tissue, helping to avoid exposure to healthy tissue, says Dr. Frame.

Crosskey, who lives in Cheverly, MD, was impressed with the efficiency of the treatment.

"I was back home within two days of my surgery and feeling great and it's been onward and upward since then." Crosskey was able to return to work within two weeks of treatment. With IORT, Crosskey had no additional radiation treatment.

"I am thankful that IORT was available for me. The cancer had not metastasized, and that was very lucky" said Crosskey.

Not all women are candidates for IORT, but those who are may be able to reduce or eliminate the amount of external radiation required after their operation. This benefit is especially important for many women with young families, full-time jobs or other life commitments that make a long regimen of radiation difficult.

“IORT potentially allows for a shorter radiation commitment, if not a single radiation treatment intraoperatively,” said Dr. Frame. “Many patients who require radiation as part of their breast cancer treatment can have at least some of their radiation treatment intraoperatively with IORT. That creates several advantages, not the least of which is shortening the number of trips a person has to make if they live outside the area.”

CTCA is excited to offer this cutting-edge technology to its patients. Although the technology is often used for breast cancer, it may also be a possibility for other cancers, including head and neck, lung, stomach and more. For CTCA, adding IORT to its arsenal of technologies. “It’s another example of CTCA’s willingness to push the envelope for new ways to care for cancer patients,” said Dr. Frame.

For Helen Crosskey, being able to use IORT was one thing she was able to use to her advantage in her fight against cancer, but her recovery has been much more than that. “I always tell people that they, as patients, have some things to do. You have to become a participant in getting better. Now it’s not about dwelling on how I got into this situation – it’s how I get out.”

*No case is typical. You should not expect to experience these results.*

### **What Cancer Types can be Treated with IORT?**

Most patients with **breast cancer**, whether early or multicentric, are candidates for IORT. Although IORT is most often used for these breast cancer patients, it could also be a possibility for the following cancer types:

- Breast (main usage)
- Head and Neck
- Lung
- Esophagus
- Stomach
- Gallbladder
- Pancreas
- Renal
- Rectum
- Gynecological
- Prostate

To learn more about CTCA, visit [cancercenter.com](http://cancercenter.com).