

Photodynamic Therapy Treatment for Skin Cancer

Cancer is a disease that's long been at the forefront of the medical world. Research studies are consistently underway, and as a result, new treatments are continually discovered and developed.

When it comes to skin cancer treatment, there are always new ideas being explored. Researchers continue to find and develop new methods to try to combat this very serious disease. Currently there are many treatment options for patients to choose from, aside from the standard surgical removal followed by radiation or chemotherapy. Photodynamic therapy, or PDT, is one of these new procedures.

Skin cancer patients receiving PDT will have the procedure on an outpatient basis, meaning the patient does not have to be admitted into a hospital to have this done. The patient is injected with a drug that is light activated to combat the cancer cells. Twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the initial procedure, the patient will return for a second treatment. In this follow-up session, a laser light is shone on the tumor cells. This second procedure directs a particular range of non-thermal red light into the skin cancer cells, activating the drug and enabling it to fight the cancerous cells. This injected drug is able to take on cancerous cells without disturbing the healthy ones. Other patients may receive PDT by way of a cream, rather than a drug injection. When the cream treatment is used, the photodynamic therapy will be performed several hours later.

Photodynamic therapy treatment for skin cancer is less intrusive, so it's easier on patients than traditional methods. There are very few side effects and positive results. PDT usually results in little general body swelling, although the patient may experience skin and eye sensitivity to light for a month or so after treatment. During this time, patients must be diligent in their exposure to sunscreen. It's more important than ever to wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, and cover up with long sleeves, sunglasses and a hat.

There are several benefits to photodynamic therapy treatment for skin cancer. It takes only a minimal number of treatments to be successful, usually no more than three. PDT can treat an entire area, so there is little chance that any cancerous cells will be missed. Little to no scarring will be caused as a result of the treatment, and the overall cost of PDT is relatively low.

The success of PDT has been so promising that many doctors see it becoming available at dermatologist's offices, rather than on an outpatient basis through hospitals or cancer clinics. Doctors are positive when speaking of PDT results. In fact, some have claimed that they need to refer to pre-PDT photographs when conducting follow-up visits, because they're unable to tell where the cancer had previously occurred.

Photodynamic therapy treatment for skin cancer has only recently become available to the public, but the overall success has been tremendous. As recently as the mid-1990s, researchers were still working to get approval for the required drugs. Now that these initial research and approval stages have passed, PDT treatment has resulted in an almost overwhelming success rate. The results have been so positive that this new therapy is being tried on other types of cancers, with similar success rates. Gastrointestinal cancer and pancreatic cancer have also been successfully treated using PDT.

Skin cancer is a disease that has caused pain, hardship and even death for countless patients. The numbers of new cases continue to climb, but new treatment methods offer the promise of a longer, cancer-free life for patients. Ask your doctor for more information about photodynamic therapy treatment for skin cancer.