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Pancreatic Cancer News

▶ **HIFU Promising in Advanced Pancreatic Cancer**

▶ According to results recently published in the journal *Radiology*,
 ▶ high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) relieves pain and
 ▶ appears active in the treatment of advanced pancreatic cancer.

▶ The pancreas, a gland located in the abdomen, produces juices that help digest foods and produces hormones glucagons and insulin, both of which help regulate blood sugar levels. Pancreatic cancer is a malignancy associated with the tissues of the pancreas. Pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Unfortunately, most pancreatic cancers are not curable and are rarely operable.

Current treatment options for pancreatic cancer include surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. Due to the dismal long-term prognosis of patients with advanced pancreatic cancer, research continues into alternative treatment strategies that may improve outcomes for patients with this disease.

HIFU is a technique that utilizes high frequency waves, aiming them at areas of cancer. The waves create heat in the targeted area and ultimately cause tissues to die. Various trials are evaluating HIFU for several different types of cancers.

Researchers from China recently conducted a small study to

evaluate HIFU in the treatment of patients with advanced pancreatic cancer. This study included eight patients whose cancer could not be surgically removed.

Following treatment with HIFU, all eight patients experienced a relief in pain, including severe back pain, within 24 to 48 hours of the procedure. Furthermore, the size of cancer had regressed between 20% and 70% in all patients. Following the procedure, 50% of the patients had a median survival time of 11 months, while the other 50% remained alive as long as 16 months following treatment. The average survival time for all patients was approximately one year (11.25 months). There were no reported side effects.

The researchers concluded that HIFU may provide a promising treatment strategy for patients with advanced, inoperable pancreatic cancer. Patients with inoperable pancreatic cancer may wish to speak with their physician regarding their individual risks and benefits of participating in a clinical trial further evaluating HIFU or other promising therapeutic approaches. Two sources of information regarding ongoing clinical trials include the National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov) and www.cancerconsultants.com.

Reference: Wu F, Wang Z-B, Zhu H, et al. Feasibility of US-guided High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound Treatment in Patients with Advanced Pancreatic Cancer: Initial Experience. *Radiology*. 2005; 236:1034-1040

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