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UK**Have your say on the News Messageboard****Sound destroys cancers**

Feb 16 2004
The Western Mail

AN INVISIBLE knife that uses high-intensity sound waves to penetrate the body and destroy tumours is set to revolutionise cancer treatment, it has been claimed.

In five to 10 years ultrasound could replace conventional surgery and radiotherapy for patients with many different types of cancer, scientists said.

The technique is undergoing early trials for liver and kidney cancer in the UK while a French team using a different system has already achieved disease-free results treating men with prostate cancer.

In China, where the technology has been pioneered, anecdotal evidence from studies of thousands of patients is said to be "astounding."

Ultrasound surgery focuses bursts of high energy sound waves on the tumour, heating it to a temperature of 60C. The tumour cells are destroyed while surrounding tissue is left unharmed.

Professor Gail ter Haar, who is leading trials of an experimental system at the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton, Surrey, said the technique could treat tumours up to the size of a small orange.

She told the American Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting in Seattle yesterday, "I think there will be cancers for which it will revolutionise treatment, but we're a long way from knowing which they will be, and exactly how it should be employed."

Patients with liver and kidney cancer are taking part in the Royal Marsden studies.

Treatment consists of two-second long bursts of ultrasound delivered to the surface of the body by a machine mounted on a gantry. A number of bursts are needed to clear an organ of cancer.

At a different centre in Oxford, Prof ter Haar has been using a commercial device developed in China to treat a similar group of patients.

She has worked with Chinese physicians who have already treated about 3,000 cancer patients with ultrasound.

"The results in China are really quite astounding," said Prof ter Haar.

"There are patients who are disease free with tumours for which there are no other treatments, particularly in the pancreas."

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Yes - deeply

0%

No - I've got a sense of humour

 100.00%

Depends on the joke

0%

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However, since the sound beam could not travel through bone or air, certain cancers would be difficult to treat.

Brain tumours and lung cancers deep behind the rib cage fell into this category.

Scientists in the UK and United States were working on the problem of getting ultrasound into the brain.

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