World-first prostate cancer trial

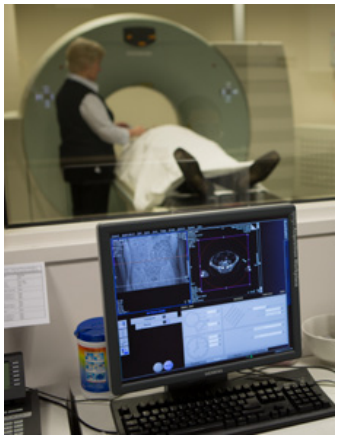
Epworth conducts crucial research into better treatments for patients with prostrate cancer

While we know that research into the causes, prevention, detection and treatment of prostate cancer is being undertaken in medical centres throughout the world, doctors at Epworth HealthCare are conducting a world-first trial with prostate cancer patients.

Over the coming years, the trial will involve several hundred men diagnosed with advanced recurrent prostate cancer following prior treatment of their primary disease. The aim is to evaluate the benefit of adding a drug that reduces bone destruction to stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) directed to 'oligometastatic' sites in these patients.

Dr Pat Bowden, director of Radiation Oncology at Epworth HealthCare and principal investigator of the trial[1], says that of the 20,000 new cases of prostate cancer diagnosed in Australia every year, more than 3,000 men will die from the disease, so examining better ways of treating recurrent prostate cancer is crucial.

"This two-armed, randomised trial comparing SRS and anti-osteoclastic therapy versus SRS alone may improve secondary tumour eradication rates leading to better quality of life in men with advanced prostate cancer.



Epworth's research trial into prostate cancer will evaluate the benefit of adding a drug that reduces bone destruction

"We know that prostate cancer can be cured if detected and treated early while still confined to the prostate gland. Once it has spread to other parts of the body, men may live for prolonged periods, but what we hope to discover is whether aggressive management of limited volume metastatic disease 'oligometastases' may delay the progression of disease to a more advanced poly-metastatic state," Dr Bowden said.

Stereotactic ablative radiotherapy (SRT) is a technique that has rapidly entered routine care of prostate cancer. It targets known sites of metastatic disease and has been shown to be a very effective and well tolerated approach when used to eradicate secondary sites of disease. Whereas the addition of anti-osteoclastic therapy has an established role in the treatment of metastatic prostate cancer, the potential benefit when combined with SRS has yet to be determined.

Dr Megan Robertson, executive director of research, confirms that Epworth remains committed to offering patients access to cutting-edge research.

"Epworth is very excited to lead clinical research trials such as this one for prostate cancer. In our vision to find better ways to control a disease affecting so many men, we are very fortunate to have financial investment from the Australian government, along with the dedication and commitment of leading medical professionals supporting the one goal – to help men survive prostate cancer," Dr Robertson said. PH

By Colleen Coghlan

1 Professor Tony Costello of Australian Prostate Cancer Research Centre Epworth and VMO Dr Andrew See are co-investigators in the trial