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Clinical Trial at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Examines Shorter Course of Radiation Treatment for Early-Stage Breast Cancer

New Brunswick, N.J., August 21, 2009 – Researchers at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) have launched a clinical trial that focuses on a shorter course of radiation treatment for those with early-stage breast cancer. CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Studies have shown that giving radiation therapy to the breast after the cancer is removed through surgery (lumpectomy) helps keep the disease from coming back in that area. The current treatment standard is known as whole breast irradiation (WBI), in which radiation is targeted at the entire breast. It is given for five days a week for five to seven weeks. Partial breast irradiation (PBI) is also used, but is only targeted to the area of the breast where the lumpectomy was performed. This treatment is given twice a day for five days. Many patients, however, are not suitable candidates for PBI, and thus require WBI, which can be burdensome for many women due to the length of treatment.

In this study, women who are not suitable for PBI alone will receive a shorter course of WBI. The daily radiation dose to be delivered will be higher in the WBI treatment than in the standard course.

Atif Khan, MD, a radiation oncologist at CINJ and assistant professor of radiation oncology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the lead investigator of the study. “By offering a more accelerated course of radiation over a shorter period of time, we hope we can provide another option to those patients who are not good candidates for PBI,” he said. “And since we’re cutting the treatment time by nearly half, that is less time patients will need to spend traveling to and from the treatment site, thus improving their quality of life.”

Before taking part in the trial, interested participants will undergo a physical exam, mammogram, chest x-ray and other tests. Participants who are selected will have radiation treatment to the whole breast once a day for 11 days. They will also receive four treatments to the immediate area where the lumpectomy was performed either before or after the whole breast treatments. The entire treatment course will be complete in three weeks. Following treatment, participants will have follow-up physical exams and a mammogram at regular intervals for the next five years.

Women over age 18 who are diagnosed with early stage breast cancer and have had or are going to have a lumpectomy to remove the disease, are eligible to participate, although other criteria also must be met. For more information on how to take part, individuals should call CINJ’s Office of Human Research Services at 732-235-8675.

Clinical trials, often called cancer research studies, test new treatments and new ways of using existing treatments for cancer. At CINJ, researchers use these studies to answer questions about how a treatment affects the human body and to make sure it is safe and effective. There are several types of clinical trials currently underway at CINJ, including those that diagnose, treat, prevent, and manage symptoms of cancer. Many treatments used today, whether drugs or vaccines; ways to do surgery or give radiation therapy; or combinations of treatments, are the results of past clinical trials.

As New Jersey's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, CINJ offers patients access to treatment options not available at other institutions within the state. CINJ currently enrolls more than 1,000 patients on clinical trials, including approximately 15 percent of all new adult cancer patients and approximately 70 percent of all pediatric cancer patients. Enrollment in these studies nationwide is fewer than five percent of all adult cancer patients.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (www.cinj.org) is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ's physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice, quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Flagship Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Major Clinical Research Affiliate Hospitals: Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Hospital, and Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, JFK Medical Center, Mountainside Hospital, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ at Hamilton), Saint Peter's University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. *Academic Affiliate

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