

UIC News Release
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Patient Receives First Prescription for FDA-approved Brain Tumor Treatment



The University of Illinois Hospital is the first center in North America to prescribe a new FDA-approved treatment for patients with the most common and aggressive type of brain tumor, glioblastoma multiforme, or GBM.

The hospital is one of the first centers in the U.S. to receive training and certification to treat patients with recurrent GBM with a new therapy called Tumor Treating Fields. This novel, non-invasive therapy is provided using a portable device, the NovoTTF-100A System made by Novocure, which uses alternating electrical fields to disrupt the rapid cell division exhibited by cancer cells.

David Messmer, 50, of Indiana is the first patient in the country to receive a prescription for the device outside of a clinical trial. He began treatment with the Novocure device Nov. 28 at the University of Illinois Hospital.

Messmer was diagnosed with GBM in November of last year. His tumor has continued to progress despite two surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation. With the support of his family, he says he was "willing to try anything."

"Chemo is just not working for me," Messmer said. "This is my next best hope."

GBM affects approximately 10,000 Americans each year. The median survival time from initial diagnosis is 15 months with optimal treatment, and median survival from the time of recurrence is only three to five months without additional effective treatment.

"Patients with recurrent GBM present a significant treatment challenge," says Dr. Herbert Engelhard, chief of neuro-oncology at the University of Illinois Hospital, which was one of the primary clinical research sites for the approval trial. The clinical trial, Engelhard said, showed that patients treated with the NovoTTF had comparable median overall survival times, fewer side effects, and better quality-of-life scores compared to patients treated with chemotherapy.

"We are proud to work with Novocure to make this state-of-the-art therapy available to those GBM patients who need it," he said.

TTF therapy provides physicians with a fourth treatment option for cancer in addition to surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy. It has been shown to effectively inhibit tumor growth by inducing cell death. The NovoTTF is a portable, non-invasive medical device designed for continuous use throughout the day by the patient. The device is placed directly on the skin near the tumor. It creates an artificial, alternating electric field within the tumor, which disrupts cancer cell division and can cause complete destruction of the dividing cancer cells. The most commonly reported side effect was a mild-to-moderate rash beneath the electrodes.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the NovoTTF-100A System for use as a treatment for adult patients with recurrent GBM. The device is intended to be used alone as an alternative to standard medical therapy for GBM after surgical and radiation options have been exhausted.

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