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Heating, Destroying Lung Tumors Extends Lives

'Thermal ablation' offers alternative for patients ineligible for surgery, researchers say

TUESDAY, July 18 (HealthDay News) -- Treatment with a non-surgical technique called thermal ablation can provide some terminal lung cancer patients with a few extra years of life, a U.S. study finds.

Researchers at Rhode Island Hospital in Providence found that 57 percent of patients treated with thermal ablation -- which uses targeted radiofrequency energy to heat and kill tumors -- survived three years. That's two years longer than the average one-year life expectancy.

The study included 41 people with early-stage I-II, non-small-cell lung cancer with a life expectancy of less than one year. The patients were not eligible for surgery.

Twenty-seven of the patients received external beam radiation after they underwent thermal ablation. The other 14 patients had interstitial brachytherapy (radiation therapy delivered directly to the tumor) after they underwent thermal ablation.

Of the 41 patients, almost 98 percent survived to six months, 87 percent to one year, more than 70 percent to two years and more than 57 percent to three years. Overall average survival was 42.2 months. The 17 patients with tumors smaller than 3 centimeters had the best outcomes, with an average survival of 44.4 months.

"Only one-third of patients diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer are eligible for surgery -- the rest face the reality of having less than 12 months to live," study author Dr. Damian Dupuy, of Rhode Island Hospital, pointed out in a prepared statement.

"These new outpatient treatments not only are effective, but allow us to treat patients who historically have no other options," he said. "Utilizing imaging and targeted thermal ablation, we can heat and destroy lung tumors, and extend a patient's life," he said.

More information

The American Cancer Society has more about [non-small cell lung cancer](#).

-- Robert Preidt

SOURCE: Society of Interventional Radiology, news release, July 17, 2006

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