

STORY BY

Melanie Hillis

The day before 48-year-old Janie Allison tucks herself into a heavy-duty sleeping bag to be warmed to 104 degrees Fahrenheit, she speaks encouragingly to anyone facing cancer. "Focus on the fight and not the disease. There is light at the end of the tunnel," she says with a grin. "Keep strong."

With inoperable lung cancer, the mother of three sons is doing everything in her power to beat the disease. She quit smoking and enrolled in a [thermal therapy treatment trial](#) at the Center for Thermal Therapy Cancer Treatment directed by Joan Bull, MD, professor of oncology at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

Allison, inspired by her father's courageous, though losing, fight to lung cancer two years ago, says her decision to participate in the trial was simple. "This program gives me an edge my father didn't have," she says. "And I think my father walks with me. And I think he more or less led me to this."

Bull is researching the effectiveness of thermal therapy or hyperthermia for the treatment of several advanced-stage cancers. She is recruiting patients with inoperable or metastatic neuroendocrine tumors or cancers of the stomach, gall bladder, lung, head or neck.

Patients receive a combination of chemotherapy, immune-modulating drugs, and total-body thermal therapy, which elevates the patient's normal body temperature to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. "Its fever range is similar to what you run during a bad case of the flu," Bull says.

Bull says evidence shows that heat can increase the effectiveness of chemotherapy treatments, allowing the drugs to reduce the tumor to an operable size.

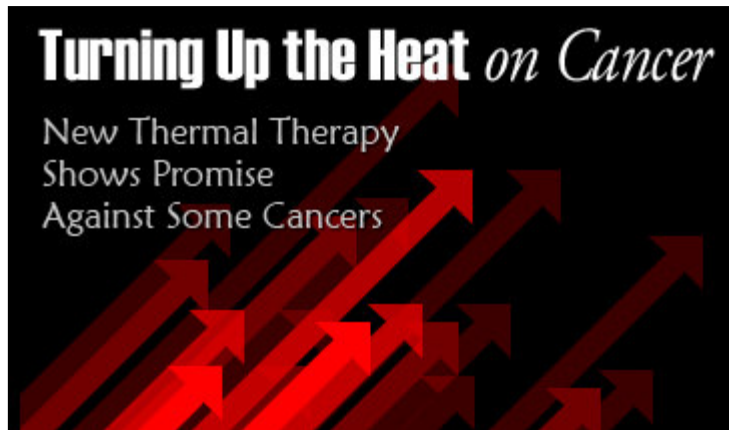
By itself, heat also can increase the body's own immunity and kill cancer cells throughout the body. "The heat helps the body to mimic what it normally does to defend itself from a virus or bacteria," says Bull.

At Memorial Hermann Hospital - Texas Medical Center, the therapy is administered once a month and patients are given light sedation during each six-hour treatment session. Patients are warmed by an infrared radiant heat device while tucked into a special mylar-lined heavy-duty sleeping bag.

Other cancers that respond

In a separate trial, Bull is investigating the benefits of hyperthermia in patients with advanced pancreatic cancer. Bull says 60 percent of her patients with pancreatic cancer had a significant response to the treatment. Robert Bass, MD is a grateful member of that percentile.

Bass, a 71-year-old retired general surgeon, was diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer a year ago. Even after a series of intense chemotherapy treatments, Bass continued to lose weight. "I knew I had to do something or this



Janie Alison rests while her body temperature is raised to a "flu-like" state in the Heckel Infrared Radiant Heat Device.

Thermal Therapy Trial Information

For persons interested in Dr. Bull's trial using thermal therapy on inoperable or metastatic neuroendocrine tumors, or cancers of the stomach, gall bladder, lung, head or neck, please contact Jamey

was going to be it. I had given myself about two to four months to live," he says.

After five hyperthermia treatments, the tumor regressed tremendously, according to his last scan. The evidence shows the tumor is no longer malignant. "This very aggressive cancer appears to have died off and is being replaced by scar tissue," he says. "This speaks very favorably of the treatment. "

For other patients, they have had a complete response from the thermal therapy treatment. "I'm not going to go out on a limb and say these people are cured, but they're doing awfully well," says Bull.

One case of remission is 53-year-old George Polewczak, who was diagnosed with gastric cancer in May 2004. After chemotherapy and radiation failed, Polewczak and his wife actively sought out an alternative online.

He says even though the thermal therapy treatment was exhausting, he felt he was overpowering the disease during his eight treatments. "I definitely felt as though by doing this (thermal therapy treatment), I was really fighting the cancer," he says. "I wouldn't be alive today if we didn't actively seek the treatment."

Polweczak has had a clean bill of health for six months.

"There is a chance for remission, but an even greater chance for quality of life to improve," Bull says. After several treatments her patients are experiencing less pain, gaining weight, eating better and continuing to go to work. "I prefer they carry on with life," she says.

Allison, who was diagnosed with her lung cancer in September 2005, says, "When you're diagnosed, you immediately can't believe it, and it is difficult because cancer is enormous. It's a bad disease, but I'm in high spirits that things will get better."

"And she's doing everything possible to get better," says Bull.

Boettcher at 713-500-6820.

For information about the trial, visit www.uth.tmc.edu/thermaltherapy



Patient Janie Allison (left) with Dr. Joan Bull, who is investigating thermal therapy treatment for cancer.

 UPDATED: 4-21-2006

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