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Health Alert: Thermal cancer treatment

(National-NBC) July 17, 2006 - Patients with certain hard to treat cancers can face uncertain futures. Even the newest chemotherapy drugs can't always provide a positive outcome, so some doctors are now using heat to induce fevers to beat the disease.

Nurse with Janie, "We've got your blood specimen, now we're going to flush your port."

Janie Allison is determined not to let history repeat itself. Her father died of lung cancer two years ago and now she's battling the same disease.

"He did the old-fashioned chemo/radiation. And I didn't want to do that, and I wanted something different and this added me a little extra edge."

That extra edge was in the form of an experimental treatment called thermal therapy.

In six separate treatments, doctors heated Janie's body temperature to 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

Dr. Joan Bull says, "This level of heat sends the immune cells to fight the cancer much better at this temperature than it does a normal temperature."

When patients are in this fever-like state, chemotherapy drugs are more effective.

"Heat makes the tumor blood vessels, the little blood vessels, very leaky, so we can get much more chemotherapy into the tumor than we could at normal temperatures," said Dr. Bull.

Patients are sedated and stay in this heated, tent-like contraption for six hours while nurses closely monitor their vital signs.

Janie's tumor has already shrunk and her doctors are hopeful the cancer is disappearing from her lymph nodes.

Janie Allison says, "I'm very optimistic. At 48, I feel like I can fight. But I just keep plugging away every day."

Janie hopes a positive attitude along with this new, experimental treatment will give her the advantage her father didn't have.

Doctors at UT Health Science Center in Houston are looking for patients to enroll in this thermal therapy study. The phone number is 713-500-6820.

To qualify, you must have inoperable stomach, gall bladder, lung, or head or neck cancer.

Posted 3:14pm by [Bryce Mursch](#)



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