

Good news for skin cancer patients in Gauteng

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Leading value-based cancer care provider, [Icon Oncology](#) is growing its treatment capacity through continued infrastructure upgrades and investment in 2020. The latest addition to its stable of 28 radiotherapy units includes two new [Womed](#) orthovoltage superficial x-ray machines which were recently commissioned at two of the company's units in Gauteng.



This is good news for patients who need treatment for skin cancer and non-malignant skin conditions who previously could not access radiation therapy.

The installation of the two new orthovoltage machines at the [West Rand Oncology Centre](#) in Roodepoort and the [Muelmed Radiation Centre](#) in Arcadia, Pretoria is a joint venture between Icon Oncology and [De Mûelenaere Oncology \(DMO\)](#). DMO is a founding member of the independent clinical oncology network, which was established to make cancer care more accessible and affordable across the country.

"This upgrade forms part of a R100 million investment in new technology which ensures that Icon Oncology remains at the forefront of radiation therapy and cancer care in SA and continues to deliver value to our patients", says Dr Ernst Marais, COO of Icon Oncology, which funded the investment.

"DMO and Icon Oncology are both champions for value-based-care in oncology. This means that we strive to keep our patients at the centre of what we do – this includes access to tested and trusted technology. Our oncology treatment units in the West Rand and Pretoria now have increased capacity and can treat patients at a more affordable rate than previously," explains Dr Sudeshen Naidoo, radiation oncologist and director of the DMO Group.

South Africa has the second highest incidence of skin cancer in the world. Skin cancer can, however, be prevented and if diagnosed and treated early, the outcomes for patients are mostly positive.

“Orthovoltage is an excellent non-invasive alternative to surgery for skin cancer in sensitive locations, such as the folds of the nose, eyelids or ears. It is a tissue-saving therapy which spares surrounding tissue from being damaged or removed and it minimises normal tissue exposure to radiation. When appropriate, it is less invasive and traumatic and we find most patients can continue to work and perform normal activities immediately following their treatment,” explains Dr Naidoo.

Orthovoltage is a type of radiation therapy that has been available since the 20th century. The x-rays used in this treatment are strong enough to kill cancer cells yet do not penetrate more than a few millimetres beyond the surface of the skin. This makes it an effective treatment for superficial and small tumours such as skin cancers and non-malignant skin conditions, including keloids.

In recent years, orthovoltage and superficial treatment machines have become less common, with much of the treatment that was previously delivered through its x-ray technology being delivered using linear accelerators. As a result, radiation therapy for skin cancer and other conditions which respond to this kind of treatment has become expensive for patients.

Dr Marais explains that the investment in what can be deemed mature technology is supported by Icon Oncology’s vision to give cancer patients the best opportunity to lead healthier lives. “Innovation in medical care is not always linked to investing in the latest technology. In value-based-care, innovation can also mean applying mature technology to deliver better outcomes for our patients. Everything we do is evidence-based and building capacity and reducing case load on some of our more advanced machines mean more patients can access appropriate treatment at the right time and at the right price,” says Marais.

Beyond malignant skin conditions, benign conditions such as Bowen’s disease, plantar fasciitis, psoriasis, mycosis fungoides and warts can also be treated through orthovoltage therapy. Surprisingly many other conditions such as frozen shoulder, tennis elbow, tendonitis, osteoarthritis, plantar fasciitis, myositis (inflammation of the muscle), Dupuytren’s contracture, fibromatosis, severe myositis (inflammation of the muscle) of the hip can also be treated using the technology.

“Our patients are at the heart of everything we do. We offer holistic treatment approaches that look at our patients’ overall needs and we are pleased that we can now add orthovoltage treatment to our portfolio of radiation treatment services. Our partnership with Icon Oncology and our shared vision is to reduce wastage, ensuring the highest quality and most cost-effective cancer treatment for the greatest number of patients,” concludes Dr Naidoo.

For more information about orthovoltage treatment please visit www.iconsa.co.za or www.cancersa.co.za.

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