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Old World Aromatherapy Meets High-Tech Cancer Treatment; CyberKnife Center of Miami Uses Ancient Techniques to Relax Patients

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Lavender is in the air at the CyberKnife Center of Miami. With the mantra that relaxed patients are better patients, the state-of-the-art radiosurgery center is embracing aromatherapy as a technique to calm and soothe patients who undergo radiation treatment.

The CyberKnife offers non-invasive treatment for tumors throughout the body and does not require anesthesia, but patients often have to remain still for more than an hour. In addition, CyberKnife's signature robotic arm, which enables the sub-millimeter accuracy of treatment, can be intimidating for patients. Enter the soothing olfactory sensations of aromatherapy. Based on a University of Miami study that showed aromatherapy relaxes adults and also at the suggestion of CyberKnife-trained radiation oncologist Dr. Mark Perman, center administrator Maria B. Freed has created an aromatherapy regimen which includes essential oils of lavender.

"Even though we have the most sophisticated cancer treatment equipment in the southeast United States, we can't forget that our patients are suffering from difficult diseases," said Freed. "Calmer, more relaxed patients will complete their treatment faster, easier and possibly with better results."

Using a robotic arm and missile guidance technology, CyberKnife delivers targeted doses of radiation to often inoperable tumors with sub-millimeter accuracy. The center treats tumors and cancer in the brain, spine, lungs, liver, head and neck, and pancreas. Treatment is covered by major insurance carriers and costs 20 to 45 percent less than conventional surgery.

Although the term "aromatherapy" is relatively new, the use of essential oils can be traced back more than 6,000 years and were even hailed in the fourth century by Greek physician Hippocrates, the father of medicine. The essential oils involved in aromatherapy are highly concentrated essences extracted from plants through the process of distillation.

In the UM study, adults given three minutes of aromatherapy with lavender reported feeling more relaxed and had less depressed moods among other benefits. The CyberKnife Center of Miami offers aromatherapy to patients on a voluntary basis.

More than 7,000 patients worldwide have been treated by the CyberKnife stereotactic radiosurgery system at 16 centers worldwide. Developed by a Stanford University neurosurgeon, it is the only robotic image-guided radiation system that enables the precise targeting and treatment of tumors anywhere in the body. The CyberKnife Center of Miami is an independent, free-standing center and is open to select community physicians who have been trained and credentialed in CyberKnife radiosurgery. For more information, call 800-204-0455 or visit www.cyberknifemiami.com.

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