



# Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers

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## Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers Named Center of Excellence for Advanced Breast Cancer Treatment

TACOMA, WA – Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers has been designated a Center of Excellence in accelerated partial breast irradiation (APBI) for offering therapy with SAVI™ breast brachytherapy. SAVI is a new kind of radiation therapy which allows more women with early stage breast cancer to choose a faster course of radiation following lumpectomy surgery. Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers was the first SAVI provider in the Pacific Northwest, is the most experienced, and offers next-day consults.

“Women receive a simple, five-day course of radiation, rather than the traditional six to seven weeks of daily radiation therapy,” explained Ann Pittier, M.D., radiation oncologist at Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers. “Patients can receive radiation treatment without giving up their active lives, and SAVI has few side effects.”

The unique design of the SAVI device delivers highly targeted radiation from within the breast through several separate, precisely placed catheters. The new device minimizes potential radiation to healthy structures such as the skin, heart and lungs. SAVI makes it possible to contour radiation based on a patient’s individual anatomy, so that many more women are now eligible to choose APBI – even women with tumors

(more)

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close the skin surface or chest wall, or those with small or irregularly shaped lumpectomy cavities.

Alice Sampson of Olympia was diagnosed with early stage breast cancer. After her surgery, she chose SAVI. "My husband and our grown son were set to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro," Sampson said. "They were going to have to cancel their trip. SAVI meant I would be finished in just two weeks. I didn't want them to miss their climb together. I also appreciated that SAVI irradiates the most at-risk tissue, not the entire breast. And I was so pleased with the warmth and care I received from Dr. Pittier and her team at Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers. The whole treatment experience was better than I had hoped for."

Designation as a Center of Excellence recognizes Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers' dedication to education, training and experience in APBI. To qualify, the physicians, medical physicists and clinical staff were required to complete a comprehensive training and education program to demonstrate proficiency in delivering radiation therapy with SAVI. Center of Excellence designation is a tribute to Tacoma/Valley Radiation Oncology Centers' deep and ongoing commitment to patient education, advocacy and leading-edge treatment for women with breast cancer.

### **Breast Conservation Therapy**

Breast conservation therapy encompasses lumpectomy (surgery to remove diseased breast tissue) and follow-up radiation. This choice is available to some women with early stage breast cancer, based on evaluation and determination of risk by the patient's doctors, and the patient's preference for this type of treatment. Until recently, the standard of care for breast conservation therapy included irradiating the entire breast with an external beam. Whole breast irradiation (WBI) involves a lengthy treatment course -- once a day, Monday through Friday, for six to seven weeks.

While WBI is effective, the significant time and cost required to complete such an extended therapy often prove too difficult for many women. In fact, this burden is cited as one of the reasons that as many as 30 percent of women do not undergo the

required radiation following lumpectomy surgery. Unfortunately, eliminating the radiation portion of treatment can significantly increase the risk that breast cancer will recur.

Accelerated partial breast irradiation (APBI) was developed as an alternative to whole breast irradiation. APBI delivers a more targeted form of radiation to the lumpectomy tumor bed, or cavity, and to the immediately surrounding tissue. This approach safely reduces the length of treatment from six weeks to just five days. This shorter timeframe is significantly more convenient than traditional whole breast irradiation, making it easier for women to choose breast conservation therapy.

### **The SAVI Procedure**

Radiation therapy with SAVI consists of two treatments per day for just five days. SAVI is inserted into the lumpectomy cavity through a small incision in the breast. The ends of the catheters remain accessible during treatment. Once the applicator is inserted, the physician expands the multiple catheters to conform to the cavity.

A tiny radioactive seed is placed inside each catheter by a computer-controlled machine. This delivers the radiation to areas where cancer is most likely to recur, while avoiding areas of healthy tissue. The radiation source is completely removed after each treatment.

After the five-day course of radiation, the physician closes the catheters and removes the SAVI applicator. Most patients are able to return immediately to their normal activities after completing therapy with SAVI.

To learn more about this exciting new treatment call 253.627.6172, email [sbissonnette@tacomaradiation.com](mailto:sbissonnette@tacomaradiation.com), or visit [www.tacomaradiation.com](http://www.tacomaradiation.com).

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