



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

For most people diagnosed with cancer, it's not just about fighting the disease. It's also about dealing with the impact the diagnosis has on your life and your loved ones. Danielle was no different. "I lost my hair, my eyebrows, my eyelashes, my right breast. It put my life on pause. The toughest part was telling my mom and my daughter, Deja."

After being diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer and undergoing a mastectomy and chemotherapy, she eventually became a patient at MPTC. For Danielle, giving up wasn't an option. She wanted to see all the great things her daughter would accomplish and to be a part of her life. When [talking about her experience](#), she said MPTC gave her hope. As a now 5-year survivor, Danielle now advocates for mothers with breast cancer, publishing a children's book to help other mothers talk to their children about cancer. Check out her full story [here](#).



Have You Heard of GammaPod?
A Faster Way to Treat Early-Stage Breast Cancer.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we recognize the resilience of [survivors like Danielle](#) and celebrate the advancements in treatment options. NCI-funded researchers are working to advance our understanding of how to prevent, detect, and treat breast cancer. Many of those [clinical trials are taking place right at MPTC](#). We are also looking at [how to address disparities](#) and improve quality of life for survivors of the disease.

Maryland Proton Treatment Center (MPTC) is the only proton center that offers access to three innovative [treatment modalities for patients with breast cancer](#), including proton therapy, external thermal therapy and [GammaPod™](#).



Invented at the [University of Maryland School of Medicine](#), the GammaPod was designed as a faster way to treat early-stage breast cancer, with less radiation reaching the heart and lungs. GammaPod is the first radiation therapy system dedicated specifically to treat early-stage breast cancer and delivers a higher dose of radiation to the tumor and less radiation to nearby vital organs such as the heart and lungs. Using an approach called stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), this innovative technology can be gentler on the skin and healthy breast tissue.

Beyond better protection to the heart and lungs, GammaPod patients can expect potentially fewer cosmetic side effects, such as discoloration of the skin. They may experience less itching or burning than they would after traditional radiation. Unlike other forms of partial breast radiation, GammaPod is non-invasive and does not require daily treatments; only one to five treatments are necessary. GammaPod can also be combined with proton therapy in select patients.

‘Stupid Cancer’ Initiative Connects AYAs with Cancer to Peers, Resources

Adolescence can be an awkward, transitional time for many people, but for adolescents and young adults living with cancer, these years may be even more confusing and alienating.



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What Does it Mean to be in Remission?

The American Cancer Society (ACS)Trusted Source states that being in remission refers to a time when the treatment for cancer is working and keeping the disease under control. Remission can last anywhere from weeks to years, either during or following treatment.



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Staff Spotlight:
Elizabeth Nichols, MD
Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs in the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine



Dr. Nichols's clinical research focuses on breast and gynecologic cancers, but she is experienced in treating patients with a wide variety of cancers. She has helped to pioneer new treatment options for treating breast cancer that minimize damage to healthy tissue, including GammaPod, the first treatment system dedicated to the stereotactic radiation of early-stage breast cancer. She also focuses on proton therapy treatments for breast cancer. For her work, she was recognized as a 2020 Physician of the Year by The Daily Record.

Clinical Trial Spotlight:
[Phase II Protocol of Proton Therapy for Partial Breast Irradiation in Early Stage Breast Cancer](#)

Current standard of care for early-stage breast cancer is mastectomy or breast conserving therapy with whole breast irradiation following lumpectomy. However, studies of breast cancer recurrence have demonstrated the majority of tumors to recur in or adjacent to the original tumor site. The question has thus been raised as to whether radiation to the whole breast is necessary or justified. Limiting radiation to the area of the original tumor may reduce acute and long-term skin and organ toxicities while making radiation therapy more convenient and less expensive.

The purpose of this research study is to compare the effects (good and bad) on women and their cancer using proton radiation therapy and to see if proton radiation therapy will prove to be beneficial for women with early-stage breast cancer.

For more information or to be considered for this study, please contact 410.369.5351.