



Clinical Trial Shows Survival Benefit with Proton Therapy in Oropharyngeal Cancer

Hampton, Va. (January 2026) – Results of a Phase III clinical trial published recently in [*The Lancet*](#) show that patients with oropharyngeal cancer (cancers of the mouth and throat) treated with proton therapy experienced improved overall survival, reduced toxicity and fewer side effects compared to patients receiving traditional photon-based radiation therapy. According to Dr. Christopher Sinesi, medical director at the Hampton University Proton Cancer Institute, the findings reinforce a long-standing understanding among clinicians at the center regarding the advantages of proton beam radiation.

“Proton beam radiation, because of its unique ranging capability, can be expected to deliver significantly less radiation to sensitive surrounding tissues than can be accomplished with x-ray-based techniques,” said Sinesi.

The trial, led by researchers at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, is considered to be the largest comparative study of its kind and the first to demonstrate a survival benefit for proton therapy. The study randomized 440 patients at 21 institutions across the country, including 17 proton centers.

Key findings identified that those who received proton therapy saw preserved quality of life and were more likely to be alive five years after treatment with a 10% improvement in overall survival, while maintaining similar rates of cancer control compared to those treated with photon-based radiation.

Decades of Proton Therapy Experience in Southeast Virginia

Sinesi emphasized that precision is critical when treating cancers of the mouth and throat due to the high sensitivity of the oropharyngeal lining and the salivary glands, which are frequently exposed during radiation treatment.

“Protons dramatically reduce the sore throat and pain associated with treatment and are more likely to leave patients with adequate salivary function after the treatments are completed,” he said. “[The trial’s findings] are good news for patients with cancer of the mouth and throat, but it is important to understand that these cancers require a multidisciplinary approach with a team consisting of surgical oncology, medical oncology and radiation oncology to provide optimal treatment regimens for each individual patient.”

For patients who are appropriate candidates for proton beam radiation, this advanced treatment technique is available at Hampton University Proton Cancer Institute. Patients and referring physicians with additional questions are encouraged to contact the center for discussion and consultation.

ABOUT HAMPTON UNIVERSITY PROTON CANCER INSTITUTE

The Hampton University Proton Cancer Institute, Cancer and Research Center (Hampton Proton) is a leading cancer treatment and research facility dedicated to advancing the fight against cancer. As pioneers in proton therapy and cutting-edge research, Hampton Proton provides compassionate care and precise treatments to patients while driving scientific discovery in the field of oncology. Headquartered in Hampton, Va., Hampton Proton, the eighth such center established in the country, is the only proton center owned and operated by a historically Black college and university (HBCU) and is committed to excellence in patient care guided by innovative research, advocacy, access to care and better outcomes. The institute treats several different types of cancer, including breast, prostate, pediatric, lung, head & neck, ocular, brain & spine and gastrointestinal.

For more information, visit hamptonproton.org.

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