

# Alternative treatment for prostate cancer to begin testing in Canada

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Canadian researchers are planning a national program to test an innovative treatment for men with advanced prostate cancer, providing an option that to date has not been available in Canada.

The National Program on Targeted Radionuclide Therapy for Prostate Cancer will focus on radionuclide therapy (RNT), which harnesses radioactive drugs to target and kill cancer cells.

Although other countries have used RNT to treat men who have advanced prostate cancer, the new initiative will be the first

time the treatment will be offered in Canada, says Prostate Cancer Canada, one of the partners in the \$4.5-million program.

B.C. resident Don Konantz, who was diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer in 2011, sought RNT treatment in Heidelberg, Germany, in 2016, after limited success with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation in Canada. With RNT, doctors were able to better determine where cancer cells were lurking in his body and how to target them, he said.

"I would equate the Heidelberg technology and this whole [RNT] technology to night-vision goggles for the body," Mr. Ko-

nantz said. "It's like looking at the body in a way you've not seen it before - in a way you couldn't see it."

RNT, combined with follow-up treatment in Canada, has helped keep Mr. Konantz's cancer at bay.

He paid for his own treatment. The Canadian trial will include 200 patients to determine whether RNT improves survival and quality of life for men with metastatic prostate cancer - cancer that has spread from the prostate to other parts of the body.

"If we end up having a treatment that is better tolerated and has better efficacy [than chemotherapy], then that would cer-

tainly revolutionize the world of prostate-cancer treatment," said Dr. François Bénard, vice-president of research with B.C. Cancer and the lead researcher for the project.

The project will use the same compound featured in a recent promising study from Australia. Dr. Bénard said. That study, which involved a small number of patients, showed results that were better than chemotherapy, and the treatment was much better tolerated.

"Now we need to know more," he said. "The data is promising, but that is one study." Currently, fewer than half of

patients who are eligible for chemotherapy for metastatic prostate cancer actually get the treatment, according to Dr. Bénard - either because they are not healthy enough to tolerate the treatment or because they are unwilling to tolerate the toxicity and side effects. And even if patients choose to pursue treatments such as hormone therapy or chemotherapy, the disease eventually stops responding, leaving patients out of options.

The national program is backed by the Movember Foundation through a grant from Prostate Cancer Canada. Clinical trials are likely to begin early next year.