

By Christine A. Holliday West Toledo Herald Writer



WEST TOLEDO - Cancer. The word alone is enough to scare anyone. When West Toledo resident Lorraine Taylor was diagnosed with breast cancer in June, she was concerned because she knew what to expect. Eighteen years ago, she had watched her husband fight esophageal cancer. She knew what radiation and chemotherapy could do to the body, and she didn't want to have the same experience. She wanted an alternative treatment. Taylor's doctor told her about a breast cancer trial that was being conducted at the Medical University of Ohio. She enrolled, hoping that her cancer would be the right kind to make her eligible for the trial. It was, and she was selected to receive the partial breast irradiation. PBI is the practice of delivering radiation only to the tissue immediately surrounding the removed tumor, where the cancer is likely to reoccur. The purpose of the trial was to compare the results of the PBI procedure to whole-breast irradiation therapy. ³I didn't want chemotherapy,² she recalled, ³and when my doctor told me about this test, I really wanted to be part of it. I especially liked that this radiation procedure took only five days.² She describes the five-day procedure as ³a walk in the park.² ³I went to the office at 9 a.m.,² she said. ³They put a small balloon filled with a saline solution into the cavity where the tumor had been, making sure that the balloon wasn't too close to the skin or to the chest wall. The radiation was delivered there from inside the balloon for about 10 minutes - that's all - then I could go. I came back the same day at 3 p.m. for another 10-minute treatment. It didn't hurt, although I could sense a bit of heat, and the skin did get a little pink over the course of the five days.² She continued, ³I didn't have to rest between treatments, I didn't have miss any activities; in fact, I went shopping between the two visits. I never really felt sick.² Three thousand women nationwide are part of the trial, which is the largest study of partial breast irradiation to date. The University Medical Center at the Medical University of Ohio is the first cancer center in Northwest Ohio to participate in the National Cancer Institute study. They will enroll one or two patients per month for the 2 1/2-year study, and the treatment will be available to female breast cancer patients of all ages. The idea is to determine which patients benefit most from this type of treatment, so that patients and their doctors can make the best decisions about available courses of treatment for breast cancer. Taylor will continue to have regular checkups, and she does take 1 mg. per day of Arimidex, a hormone treatment used following breast cancer surgery. The pill is very small, but it will be a regular part of her life for the next five years. ³Amazing, isn't it?² Taylor said. ³Something so small can be so valuable. And I can live with the occasional flashes I get from the medicine.² The procedure used on Taylor is called mammosite, and more information on this FDA-cleared treatment is available at www.mammosite.com. Taylor urged women of all ages who are diagnosed with breast cancer to talk to their doctors about this trial.

This story appeared in the Nov. 23 West Toledo Herald.