

Prostate cancer treatment draws fire

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U.S. medical tourists are headed to Latin American health clinics to receive a controversial prostate cancer treatment not approved in the United States.

High-intensity focused ultrasound, or HIFU therapy, uses isolated bursts of near-boiling temperatures to attack cancerous tissues in the prostate through a rectal probe, The New York Times reported Friday.

U.S. HIFU, a company touting the treatment at international clinics, said the treatment provides an alternative to more conventional treatment without the sexual or urinary side-effects of other treatments.

The director of the U.S. HIFU, Dr. George M. Suarez, told the Times the treatment's \$25,000 price tag is justified and claimed the treatment is an alternative to surgery or radiation with fewer side effects.

U.S. HIFU is sponsoring FDA-approved clinical studies to win approval for the treatment in the United States. Canadian and EU officials have approved the treatment.

Dr. Peter Scardino with the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center told the Times the treatment does provide an alternative method but added that "for the treatment of the average ordinary prostate cancer, I think it's a second-class form of therapy."

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