

Researchers find new treatment for HPV-associated oral cancer

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Mayo Clinic researchers have found that a new, shorter treatment for patients with HPV-associated oropharynx cancer leads to excellent disease control and fewer side effects, compared to standard treatment.

The new treatment employs minimally invasive surgery and half the standard dose of [radiation](#) therapy, compared to current treatments. The new treatment also lasts for two weeks, rather than the standard six weeks.

Results of a study of the new treatment were presented Tuesday, Oct. 20, at the [American Society for Radiation Oncology's Annual Meeting](#).

"Throat [cancer](#) caused by HPV is one of the fastest-growing cancer types in the United States," says Daniel J. Ma, M.D., a radiation oncologist at Mayo Clinic and the study's author.

Dr. Ma says that while the [standard treatment](#) for this type of cancer leads to high cure rates, it may also result in many short-term and long-term treatment toxicities, including dry mouth, problems swallowing, neck stiffness and jawbone problems.

"Many of these side effects are directly linked to the amount of radiation used for treatment," says Dr. Ma.

Dr. Ma and his colleagues developed an initial clinical trial looking at a new treatment using minimally invasive surgery and half the standard dose of radiation. The initial clinical trial demonstrated that well-selected patients could have excellent disease control with much lower toxicity using the new treatment.

"Our findings suggest that in select patients with HPV-associated oropharynx a shorter course treatment, compared to the standard of care, yields a similar result," says Dr. Ma. Based on these phase 3 results, Mayo Clinic has adopted this shorter course treatment as its standard of care for well-selected patients.

Dr. Ma and his colleagues are now developing future clinical trials that

will test whether it is possible to combine lower doses of radiation with other [treatment](#) strategies, such as proton beam therapy, to further reduce toxicity to patients.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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