



NEWS RELEASE

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Proton Therapy Improves Survival and Reduces Side Effects in Patients Treated for Head and Neck Cancer

Multi-institutional study published in The Lancet reports results from the largest randomized Phase III trial to date comparing protons and IMRT

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (January 8, 2026) – A new clinical research article published last month in [*The Lancet*](#) says patients with head and neck cancer treated with proton therapy may have better survival and quality of life outcomes compared to people treated with IMRT.

At five years from treatment, 90.9% of proton patients were alive compared to 81% of patients who were treated with traditional radiation – a 10% improvement in overall survival.

Head and neck cancer patients treated with protons tolerated the treatment better than those who were treated with IMRT. The proton patients had fewer side effects, including less feeding tube dependence, less dry mouth, better swallowing, and less immune system suppression.

The multi-institutional study is the largest randomized Phase III trial to date comparing precise proton therapy (IMPT) to traditional photon therapy (IMRT). The study randomized 440 patients at 21 sites across the U.S., including 17 proton centers.

The study, led by Dr. Steven Frank of MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, adds to the body of evidence published in peer-reviewed journals that proton therapy offers patients a cancer treatment option that can improve survival and reduce side effects. Radiation oncology experts in head and neck cancer at the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute have observed in their research similar patient outcomes as the MD Anderson study and continue to conduct research to find out which patients may most benefit from proton therapy, including a current clinical trial for people with HPV-related oropharyngeal cancer.

About the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute

The UF Health Proton Therapy Institute is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization affiliated with the UF College of Medicine and the UF Health Cancer Institute, an NCI-Designated Cancer Center and Florida Cancer Center of Excellence, dedicated to delivering state-of-the-art cancer treatment

and setting new standards for treating and curing cancer. It is an accredited radiation oncology facility by the American College of Radiology. The cancer treatment facility houses both conventional radiation and proton therapy and delivers proton therapy to 100 patients a day. For more information about the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute, please visit www.floridaproton.org or call 904.588.1800.

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