Virginia Mason Plays Leading Role in Pancreatic Cancer Research

SM-88, a new investigational agent, has shown potential to help patients with pancreatic cancer. SM-88 uses a derivative of tyrosine to essentially act as a poison pill to attack cancer cells. It is currently being tested with low levels of three other commercially available drugs to enhance the effect of the altered tyrosine.

The compound has several advantages that make it attractive to patients. It’s an entirely oral therapeutic preparation, has virtually no side effects and employs a metabolic approach to attacking cancer rather than chemotherapy.

“Because of the absence of side effects and the fact that it’s so easy to take, it can be used by patients who are elderly, frail or who have already experienced several types of therapy,” says Vincent Picozzi, MD, hematologist/oncologist at Virginia Mason.

“If this compound turns out to be promising, it can really broaden the therapeutic possibility for patients with pancreatic cancer.”

Notably, SM-88 will be the first experimental treatment for the Precision Promise initiative, an attempt by the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network to transform the mechanism of clinical research and clinical progress in pancreatic cancer. “This is a whole new paradigm by which clinical research is done and includes a new relationship with the FDA, a new clinical trial design, more sophisticated molecular testing, new supportive care and a new relationship with the pharmaceutical industry.”

The Precision Promise initiative will be executed by a new 14-institution clinical trials consortium, which includes Virginia Mason. Dr. Picozzi is chairman of the consortium and is a co-principal investigator of the entire project. “Virginia Mason is playing a central role in the consortium and continues to be a national and international leader in clinical development for pancreatic cancer care,” says Dr. Picozzi.

Patients Benefit from Surgical Treatments for Rectal Prolapse and Fecal Incontinence

Historically, fecal incontinence and rectal prolapse have been underdiagnosed. According to Vlad Simianu, MD, MPH, colon and rectal surgeon at Virginia Mason, one in five women are affected by fecal incontinence once per year while 10 percent of women are affected at least once a month. Fortunately, newer, more advanced diagnostic testing and treatment options available at Virginia Mason can help patients successfully regain control over their lives.

“Until recently, there weren’t a lot of great solutions for these conditions, but that’s really changed in the last couple of years,” says Dr. Simianu. Virginia Mason is particularly experienced in implanting sacral nerve modulators, having performed more than 5,000 such procedures.

Virginia Mason has been at the forefront of laparoscopic and robotic surgical procedures for incontinence and prolapse. Goals for the surgical treatment of prolapse include: 1) eliminating the prolapse and repairing anatomic defects, 2) correcting functional abnormalities (constipation or incontinence), and 3) avoiding creating new bowel dysfunction. Procedures are typically performed jointly by colorectal surgeons and urogynecologists specializing in pelvic floor reconstruction, and have high success rates in preventing prolapse from returning. Patients typically spend one to two days in the hospital.

Virginia Mason is also a leader in the use of comprehensive diagnostic testing to determine the exact cause of fecal incontinence, ensuring that each patient receives an individualized treatment plan. Virginia Mason offers the following diagnostic tests for all patients:

- Anal manometry
- Anal and rectal ultrasound
- Cine defecography
- Urodynamics/video urodynamics
- Pelvic floor muscle retraining

A multidisciplinary approach is also critical to the successful treatment of prolapse and incontinence. The team consists of a colorectal surgeon, urogynecologist, radiologists, nurses, physical therapists and associated providers such as pain psychologists and social workers.
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Referral Assistance
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FAX: 800-641-9002
e-MAIL: Referral@VirginiaMason.org
WEB: VirginiaMason.org/For-Clinicians

Virginia Mason accepts all major insurance plans and always welcomes new patients. A primary care relationship is not required for referrals. For more info about insurance coverage, please visit VirginiaMason.org/Insurance.

Virginia Mason Tops List in Washington Health Alliance Report on Quality, Patient Experience

Virginia Mason ranked first in a new report from the Washington Health Alliance that combined patient experience survey results with quality rankings. The Washington Health Alliance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that shares data on health care quality and value to help providers, patients, employers and union trusts make better decisions about health care.

Patient experience results were gathered from a statewide survey of approximately 250,000 Washington state residents about their experience with their primary care provider. The Alliance also ranked medical groups based on their results for more than 30 health care quality measures.

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Finding Safety in Places of Moral Hazards
Friday, May 17
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