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新聞稿 PRESS RELEASE

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Surgery
Embarks on New Cancer Treatment
For the Second Most Common Cancer in the Territory

The Department of Surgery of The Chinese University of Hong Kong has recently successfully applied Photodynamic Therapy (PDT), a new and exciting technique for cancer treatment. Using photosensitive drugs and lasers, PDT offers a "magic bullet" method of killing cancers without harming the patients.

The technique combines a tumour seeking drug which after injection into the body is concentrated in the cancer. The drug is harmless when injected into the patient. The drug concentrated within the tumour, is then activated by laser light and this "switching on " of the drug causes the release of active components which are lethal to the cancer cells but harmless to the surrounding normal tissues of the body which do not contain the drug.

A Treatment Programme has recently begun at the Prince of Wales Hospital headed by Dr C A Van Hasselt of the Department of Surgery of the Chinese University in collaboration with doctors from the Department of Radiotherapy. Patients who have failed to respond to conventional therapy by radiation and whose outlook would otherwise be doomed will be treated. After injection of the drug, light energy from a Gold Vapour Laser will be transmitted to the tumour site at the back of the nose by a fibre-optic system in order to activate the drug concentrated within the cancer. The few patients treated so far have shown that the nasopharyngeal tumour is extremely sensitive to PDT. To date there is no trace of tumour at any of the sites treated.

Funding for this expensive programme has been provided by a most generous donation from the Shaw Foundation who had the foresight to realize the immense value of this programme both to patients in Hong Kong and, indeed, patients worldwide. The Gold Vapour Laser and cancer seeking drug have been supplied from Australia.

Dr John Carruth, Visiting Professor from the United Kingdom, President of the European Laser Association and Past President of the International Photodynamic Association has stated that "This is the most important programme worldwide to date on this new and dramatically exciting treatment for cancer. It offers real hope to a large number of patients with this cancer".

Several thousand patients with a wide variety of malignant tumours in different parts of the body have been treated worldwide to date with most encouraging results. The technique has been shown to be effective in curing a wide range of cancers.

Nasopharyngeal cancer is the second most common cancer in Hong Kong affecting people of a younger age group than most other cancers. It is in fact by far the most frequently found cancer in adults less than 50 years old. This unusually common cancer is thought to be due to a genetic predisposition in southern Chinese people. The traditional dietary habit of eating preserved food such as salted fish is also thought to contribute to the frequency of this cancer in the region. This tumour occurs in the back of the nose and until now the only treatment available has been Radiation Therapy. However this is not always successful in curing this cancer and to many patients who fail to respond, the outlook has been hopeless.

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Attachment: 4 photos on Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)