

Mayo Clinic News Network

O29 When Breast Cancer Travels to the Brain: Laser Therapy

Intro: A diagnosis of cancer can be very difficult, especially if you get news that the disease has spread to other areas of your body, such as the brain. For many patients, brain surgery is the best way to tackle those tumors, but it’s not always the easiest procedure and patients may have to postpone additional therapy due to recovery time. Now, doctors at Mayo Clinic are using a less invasive procedure called thermal laser ablation. It allows more people with metastatic cancer to the brain to get the treatment they need.

Video	Audio
TRT 2:04 Pam Seeley	“She just turned 8.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	But right after Pam Seeley delivered little Emma almost a decade ago, she got some very tough news.
Pam Seeley Breast cancer survivor	“Basically, I had a premature baby and one week later I found out I had breast cancer.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Stage four breast cancer that had spread to her liver. Chemotherapy, radiation and a mastectomy put Pam into remission. Years later, the cancer came back. This time in her brain. Twice.
Pam Seeley	“To find out it was in my brain and considered stage four again and to hear I have to have surgery on my brain. That was pretty scary.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Pam was not an ideal candidate for the traditional open brain surgery she’d had before.
Pam Seeley	“Because of the location of it, surgery wasn’t an option.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	The tumor was close to the area of the brain that controls peripheral vision. So instead of open surgery, Pam had what’s called thermal laser ablation. During the procedure the surgical team opens a

	small hole in the skull. Then, using an MRI to guide them, they insert a catheter and move it to the tumor. Once there, they use high temperatures kill the tumor and spare surrounding tissue.
Voice of Vivien Williams	Mayo Clinic neurosurgeon Dr. Robert Wharen says the procedure is beneficial for patients like Pam and others who are living with metastatic disease and are in the midst of chemotherapy or radiation.
Robert Wharen, M.D. Mayo Clinic neurosurgeon	“Those treatments usually have to be stopped for traditional surgery because you have a wound that needs to heal. But because of the minimally invasive nature of laser ablation, we’re able to do the ablation technique in a manner in which we don’t have to necessarily stop chemotherapy and radiation because it requires a very small wound that would not be a problem.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Thermal laser ablation. Helping women like Pam live with cancer. For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Vivien Williams.

Anchor tag:

Dr. Wharen says laser ablation is not right for all patients with breast cancer. But for many, it offers another way to fight the disease.

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