

Advances in treating pancreatic cancer mean options and hope

VIDEO	AUDIO
Mark Truty, M.D. Surgical Oncology Mayo Clinic	"If you think about it, breast cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer, brain cancer, pancreas cancer continues to be the least survivable of all of those cancers."
	But it is more survivable now than it used to be. Dr. Mark Truty, a Mayo Clinic cancer surgeon, says that's due in part to advances in the approach to treating the cancer.
	You see, patients who can have surgery for their pancreatic cancer live longer than those who cannot. Unfortunately, in the past, surgery wasn't an option for most patients, but with better chemotherapy came dramatic changes. Now, more patients are considered candidates for curative surgery.
	"Those patients that are able to undergo chemotherapy prior to the surgery tend to do much better than they historically have done."
	That includes patients who may have been considered inoperable elsewhere due to complex tumors involving blood vessels. Mayo Clinic is the first and only center that routinely uses positron emission tomography, or PET, scans to help determine if the chemotherapy has been effective.
	"This is what we want to see at the beginning; we want to see a tumor lighting up really bright prior to chemotherapy. And then, after chemotherapy, we want to see it sort of disappear the activity. That would suggest that the chemotherapy was effective. And then when we ultimately operate on these patients and we take the tumors out, the pathologist tells us that all the cancer is dead."
	The primary goal for any patient with pancreatic cancer is to extend their life and maintain or improve their quality of life. Advances like this are offering patients hope.

	"Oh, without question, they should have hope."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Joel Streed.