Advances in medicine improve quality of life for men with prostate issues

By Katherine Michalets
Special to The Freeman

MILWAUKEE — Whether a man is dealing with a diagnosis of prostate cancer or an enlarged prostate, his quality of life is often compromised. Two doctors at the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin are implementing new medical procedures to help improve the quality of men’s lives and their longevity.

New treatment improves longevity

Dr. Kathryn Bylow, medical oncologist, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin and assistant professor at the Medical College, participated in a national trial to evaluate how giving men whose prostate cancer had spread beyond the gland chemotherapy at the start of treatment would affect their longevity. The study found that those men lived longer than men who only received hormonal treatment.

The results released this past June, Bylow said, showed that the men who had extensive metastasized cancer and received chemotherapy and hormonal treatment at the start lived about 17 months longer than those who only received the traditional hormonal treatment.

Dr. Kathryn Bylow

PROSTATE

from page 8

Traditionally, when tests showed that the hormonal treatment stopped working, then chemotherapy would begin, she said.

Bylow said the trial results are unprecedented. Research is still ongoing and questions such as whether to administer chemotherapy before or after surgery are still being answered.

“For those of us who treat cancer, this was a pretty exciting find that there are a lot of promising drugs being tested in prostate cancer,” she said.

Screening for prostate cancer

While prostate cancer is common and is the most diagnosed cancer in men, Bylow said if it is caught early it is very curable.

Screening remains controversial, she said, with there being many different recommendations regarding when and if to screen.

“I think most of us that treat prostate cancer feel that there is a role for screening,” Bylow said.

She recommends that men have a discussion with their primary physician, especially those who have a history of prostate cancer in the family.

The most common symptoms are urinary, generally difficulty with urinating, and sometimes there will be blood in the urine, she said. If a person gets pain in their bones that won’t go away or gets worse, Bylow advises that that person should see a doctor.

Thanks to new treatment options, progress has been made on curing prostate cancer.

“Even if they are diagnosed with cancer that has spread, it is still very treatable,” Bylow said.

Minimally invasive procedure improves life quality

When Dr. Amy Guise, urologist with Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin, learned about a new minimally invasive procedure called HOLEP to help enlarged prostate glands in 2012, she decided to get some hands-on experience. After assisting in about 50 procedures, Guise was able to bring the procedure to Milwaukee — the first to do so.

HOLEP provides relief for men with enlarged prostates who are required to catheterize themselves. It involves using a laser to unplug the urinary tubes by removing excess benign prostate tissue and keeping healthy tissue intact.

Dr. Amy Guise

Since starting to perform the procedure in August 2013, Guise said she has done it about 60 to 70 times and has seen much success. One patient, a 92-year-old man who had been using a catheter for seven years, came to her with a large bladder stone. After removing the stone and then performing the HOLEP procedure, the man was able to urinate on his own.

She said for him and others, the HOLEP procedure has greatly improved their quality of life. In the past, many men were forced to move into a nursing home because of catheterization, Guise said.

continued on page 10