Illinois Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Diseases Provides Hope for Cancer Patients

November is Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month. But year-round awareness of pancreatic cancer has been on the rise as a number of high-profile patients undergo treatment for the disease and some have succumbed to it. News about pancreatic cancer is not all bad, however, and facilities like the Illinois Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Diseases – and its director, Dr. Malcolm Bilimoria – are providing hope for many patients.

Arlington Heights, IL (PRWEB) November 2, 2009 -- Recently opened, the new Illinois Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Diseases at Northwest Community Hospital in the Chicago suburb of Arlington Heights is already on track to do more than 100 pancreatic surgeries this year. This is significant to patients seeking treatment of the disease because studies have shown that doctors and hospitals that care for large numbers of people with pancreatic cancer most often provide the best quality care.

“Expertise is what matters in treating the disease,” said Dr. Malcolm Bilimoria, director of the center. He cites a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2003 that shows mortality rates were lower for high-volume surgeons. That result is particularly true with regard to pancreatic surgeries.

Out of the several methods of treatment for people with pancreatic cancer, Dr. Bilimoria is an expert in the Whipple procedure, considered one of the most complex surgeries, second only to organ transplants. The Whipple procedure can increase survival and offers a real chance at a cure for many pancreatic cancer patients.

“Surgery to remove a tumor offers the best chance for long-term control of all types of pancreatic cancer,” Dr. Bilimoria said.

As a surgical oncologist who specializes in pancreatic and hepatobiliary surgeries, Dr. Bilimoria has averaged 50 to 75 Whipple surgeries per year over the past decade, compared to many surgeons who may perform only 10 a year.

At the Illinois Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Diseases, Dr. Bilimoria is part of a multidisciplinary team of pancreatic experts that includes board-certified surgeons, radiation oncologists, pathologists, endocrinologists and gastroenterologists. Furthermore, patients receive the support of a nurse navigator, physician assistant, social worker and nutritionists.

Pancreatic cancer is the fourth-leading cause of cancer death, and is considered one of the deadliest cancers. This year, the American Cancer Society estimates there will be approximately 42,500 new cases of pancreatic cancer and about 35,000 deaths from the disease.

For more information about pancreatic cancer and the new Illinois Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Diseases at Northwest Community Hospital, visit www.nch.org/pancreas.

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