

High-tech hope for Eastern Cape cancer patients

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There is renewed hope for cancer patients in the Eastern Cape who need treatment for difficult to reach tumours, with the installation of a new state-of-the-art machine at the [Icon Oncology](#) radiation therapy unit based in Port Elizabeth.



The official commissioning of the machine was celebrated last week and attended by the Icon Oncology radiation therapy team and the expert team of [CancerCare oncologists](#) based at the Langenhoven Drive Oncology Centre, where the radiation unit is based.

The installation of the multi-million-rand [Varian TrueBeam linear accelerator](#) (LINAC) means that patients who previously had to travel outside of the Eastern Cape for stereotactic treatment, can now receive this advanced cancer treatment in their home province.

“This is very good news for patients and their families who today have access to a sophisticated cancer treatment centre close to home. Patients and their families often have to shoulder the additional financial and emotional burden as they travel to far off cities such as Cape Town for the treatment this LINAC offers. We hope that this new LINAC lessens this burden and improves their cancer treatment journey,” says Beverley Sebastian, the regional business manager for Icon Oncology.

According to Dr John Crockett a medical and radiation oncologist based at the unit, the TrueBeam’s biggest benefit over the equipment it replaces is that it offers a diverse range of radiation therapies including; stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), volumetric modulated radiation therapy (VMAT) technology, intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), image-guided radiotherapy (IGRT) and RapidArc radiotherapy.

“In layman’s terms this means that we can target tumours with extreme accuracy and minimize damage to surrounding healthy tissue. This high-quality LINAC offers sophisticated functionality and is one of the most advanced treatment capabilities available in the world. It also reduces the time it takes to treat a tumour due to its precision, which means a less traumatic experience for patients during treatment,” explains Dr Crockett.

The LINAC arrived in August this year and was installed by a team of experts. Icon Oncology, the leading network of private oncologists in South Africa, made the investment possible and also ensured that all the practitioners at the unit received the necessary training to operate the machine. The first patient received treatment on Monday 9 November and the oncology unit can now treat between 50 and 60 patients per day. “The increase in capacity means that more patients can receive much needed treatment. We would like to partner with the Eastern Cape Department of Health to improve public access to these facilities,” says Dr Jörn Malan, one of the medical and radiation oncologists at the Langenhoven Oncology Centre.

“The upgrade forms part of an ongoing multi-million Rand investment in new technology which ensures that Icon Oncology and our network of partner oncologists remain at the forefront of cancer care. We are committed to grow our cancer treatment capacity in the Eastern Cape to ensure patients can access the best possible technology and treatment available. To this end we look forward to commissioning a Varian Halcyon LINAC at our PE unit in 2021. It is our vision to create one-stop oncology centres in areas where these facilities are needed and to continue to deliver the right care to our patients, at the right time and at the right price”, says [Anthony Pedersen](#), CEO of Icon Oncology.

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