

Canadians leading against cancer - the 60th anniversary of first treatment with Co-60

2011 marks the 60th anniversary of the world's first cancer treatment with Cobalt-60 radiation. This medical breakthrough took place in London, Ontario on October 27, 1951 and marked an important milestone for both the fight against cancer and Canada's emergence as a leader in the field of oncology. The physics behind the development of Cobalt-60 was funded by the Canadian Cancer Society and was led earlier by Dr. Harold Johns in Saskatoon.

The development of Cobalt-60 radiation therapy opened a window into the human body and for the very first time in history, we were able to treat deep-seated tumours without hurting the skin. This was the first major advancement in the radiation treatment of cancers since Roentgen's discovery of X-rays in 1895.

To date, approximately 35 million cancer patients worldwide have benefited from Cobalt therapy pioneered in Canada. Despite advances made in radiation therapy technology, the Cobalt-60 unit remains the world's main radiation treatment method. Due to its cost effectiveness, reliability and ease of use, it is prevalent in developing countries. Cobalt-60 technology is still used to treat roughly 70 per cent of the world's cancer cases treated by radiation.

Click here http://www.lhsc.on.ca/About_Us/LHSC/Publications/Features/Cobalt-60.htm to listen to the broadcast of this world first from The CBC Digital Archives Website.

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