

## Treating Thyroid Cancer Is Easy to Swallow

### RADIOACTIVE IODINE THYROID CANCER TREATMENT (I<sup>131</sup>) AND FOLLOW-UP CLINIC

The team of physicians at Northeast Radiation Oncology Center (NROC) provides radioactive iodine treatment (I<sup>131</sup>) for people who require this highly specialized treatment and follow-up care after the removal of their thyroid cancer. Mercy Hospital in Scranton, which is a partner with the physicians at NROC, is the only facility in Lackawanna County licensed and equipped for the inpatient stay that is necessary for this treatment procedure.

#### What is I<sup>131</sup> treatment?

Iodine I<sup>131</sup> is a radioactive form of iodine that destroys thyroid cancer cells that may remain after the removal of a cancerous thyroid gland. It is a non-invasive therapy which is given as an easily swallowed capsule.

#### Why does the administration of I<sup>131</sup> require hospitalization?

Because the capsule of iodine contains a highly radioactive substance, the patient must be cared for and monitored in a facility licensed and equipped to control such radioactive material, such as Mercy Hospital in Scranton, so no one else is unnecessarily exposed to the radioactive material.

#### Why is the radioactive material not harmful to the patient?

Iodine I<sup>131</sup> is quickly absorbed by the thyroid cells, where it destroys any remaining cells. The radioactive iodine that is not absorbed by these cells is rapidly eliminated from the body through fluids such as urine, feces, saliva and perspiration and is not a danger to the patient once it is eliminated.

#### Why is long-term follow-up necessary after I<sup>131</sup> treatment?

Patients who have had I<sup>131</sup> treatment after the removal of their thyroid cancer require routine medical follow-up to make sure their cancer has not re-occurred or spread to another part of their body.

#### How does the NROC Thyroid Clinic help patients in follow-up?

People treated with radioactive iodine by the NROC treatment team have the opportunity to participate in a specialized clinic conducted at NROC for long-term follow-up and monitoring of their thyroid health.

For many years, thyroid medical checkups required patients to stop taking the thyroid hormone replacement they needed after the removal of their thyroid. Going off the thyroid replacement hormone resulted in unpleasant side effects for the patient.

Now, thanks to a new medication known as Thyrogen, the follow-up care is much less difficult for thyroid cancer patients. The NROC Thyroid Clinic provides routine follow-up care for these patients conveniently with little or no unwanted side effects.

NROC is the only facility in Lackawanna County offering this critical service for people who have undergone the entire or partial removal of their thyroid because of cancer.