

# Duke doctor studies heart to fight war on cancer

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tion alone or radiation plus a microwave-laden water bath on the tumor site.

Among women who had previously undergone radiation, only 23 percent had their tumors disappear with a second round—compared with 68 percent who underwent heat plus radiation.

The study, reported in May's *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, didn't show that hyperthermia helped patients live longer; most also had cancer in parts of the body not heated.

But last month, Jones and researchers from Norway and

the Netherlands reported a study of 68 patients with advanced cervical cancer that found adding heat to standard radiation and chemotherapy yielded an 84 percent survival rate, better than expected. They now are enrolling 400 cervical cancer patients in a Phase III study to try to prove hyperthermia's effect.

Why would heat work? It's thought to kill some cancer cells directly and help chemotherapy better penetrate certain tumors by dilating blood vessels.

But mostly it's done to render the cancer more vulnera-

ble to radiation. Heat increases the amount of oxygen inside cells. Oxygen-starved cells are more resistant to radiation damage, and tumor cells contain less oxygen than healthy tissue.

That's of particular interest for patients with recurrent cancer, because they can tolerate only so many rounds before radiation damages, even destroys, healthy tissue or bone surrounding the cancer.

Much work must still be done to prove heat really works, cautions Dr. Len Lichtenfeld of the American Cancer Society.

The National Cancer Institute funded more than \$19 million in hyperthermia research last year to explore the outstanding questions; half a dozen clinical trials involving a variety of heat treatments are under way.

"If it breaks out again, we'll just do it again," says Williams, the Raleigh woman who had two separate batches of chest-wall tumors zapped with heat and radiation. While she has cancer elsewhere in her body, a year later none of the heat-treated tumors has returned. "I'm tickled pink."

On the Net:

NCI hyperthermia info:  
[cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/7\\_3.htm](http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/7_3.htm)  
Hyperthermia studies:

[www.cancer.gov/search/ResultsClinicalTrialsAdvanced.aspx?proctocolsear](http://www.cancer.gov/search/ResultsClinicalTrialsAdvanced.aspx?proctocolsear)

## Left-handed students make adjustments

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children to write with their right hands, which could result in learning problems.

These days, teachers do nothing to change a child's hand preference and there are adaptations that make life in the classroom easier.

"There are scissors you can flip," said Owen, referring to

scissors that can be used equally well by left-handed and right-handed students.

And while all the students said they are accustomed to working with right-handed tools, Kali's eyes lit up when she heard that there are companies that specifically design kitchen utensils, pens, pencils, watches, and even computer games for

people who are left-handed.

"That would be neat," Kali said.

Danielle said she can't cut with a knife using her left hand because she's gotten used to doing it with her right hand.

For the most part, the children say being left-handed isn't a problem and can even be a bit of an advantage.

"I like it because it makes me different," Kali said.

## Unexpected weight loss may be first sign of Alzheimer's

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sion sometimes precedes Alzheimer's and can also cause weight loss, which might at least partly explain the findings.

People tend to lose weight in old age because of loss of bone and muscle mass, but the researchers said factoring in age, chronic disease, gender and other characteristics

that might have affected weight didn't change the results.

On the Net:  
*Neurology*:  
[www.neurology.org](http://www.neurology.org)

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