

Transcript Details

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A Radiation Oncologist's Perspective on COVID-19

Dr. Birnholz:

Coming to you from the ReachMD studios, this is COVID-19: On the Frontlines. I'm Dr. Matt Birnholz, and on today's program, we caught up with Dr. Gregory Kubicek, Associate Professor of Radiation Oncology at Rowan University and staff radiation oncologist at the MD Anderson Cooper Cancer Center. Dr. Kubicek shared perspectives on COVID-19's impacts on radiation oncology, and some key lessons he's learned along the way.

Let's hear from him now.

Dr. Kubicek:

It's certainly changed a lot of what we do in very rapid-fire fashion. For patients that are newly diagnosed or actively receiving treatment, we've had to take great precautions to screen everyone because these patients are high risk. If they were to get the coronavirus, the chances of them doing poorly are much higher than the average person, so we've had to, again, take great measures to make sure that exposures are reduced and that we minimize the chance of any of our patients ever getting coronavirus infection.

We've been screening all patients before they come into the door, and so every patient gets a screening questionnaire, looking at temperature, exposure symptoms, and anyone that has any suspicion for having coronavirus will get spot tested and will only proceed with either treatment or further diagnostic procedures after their screening comes back as negative. An unfortunate byproduct of the pandemic is that fewer patients are coming in for either screening scans or ignoring symptoms that they would otherwise come in to their family doctor for, and what this means is that we've been seeing a decrease in newly diagnosed lung cancer. Our fear is that we may catch the cancer at later stages in which it's more difficult to treat and cure.

I think the encouraging thing is that we've proven that we can keep people safe. We've proven that with the screening procedures we have in place at MD Anderson at Cooper, that we've not had any patients actively acquire coronavirus during their treatment. And even treating patients that have had coronavirus prior to treatment, we've been able to make sure that they were able to be treated in a safe method so that they do not expose coronavirus-negative patients to the virus, and so it's very encouraging that if there ever were to be further outbreaks or further viral infections, that we're confident that we can do so in a safe manner.

Dr. Birnholz:

That was Dr. Gregory Kubicek from the MD Anderson Cooper Cancer Center. To access more episodes from COVID-19: On the Frontlines, and to add your perspectives toward the fight against this global pandemic, visit us at ReachMD.com and become Part of the Knowledge. Thank you for listening.