

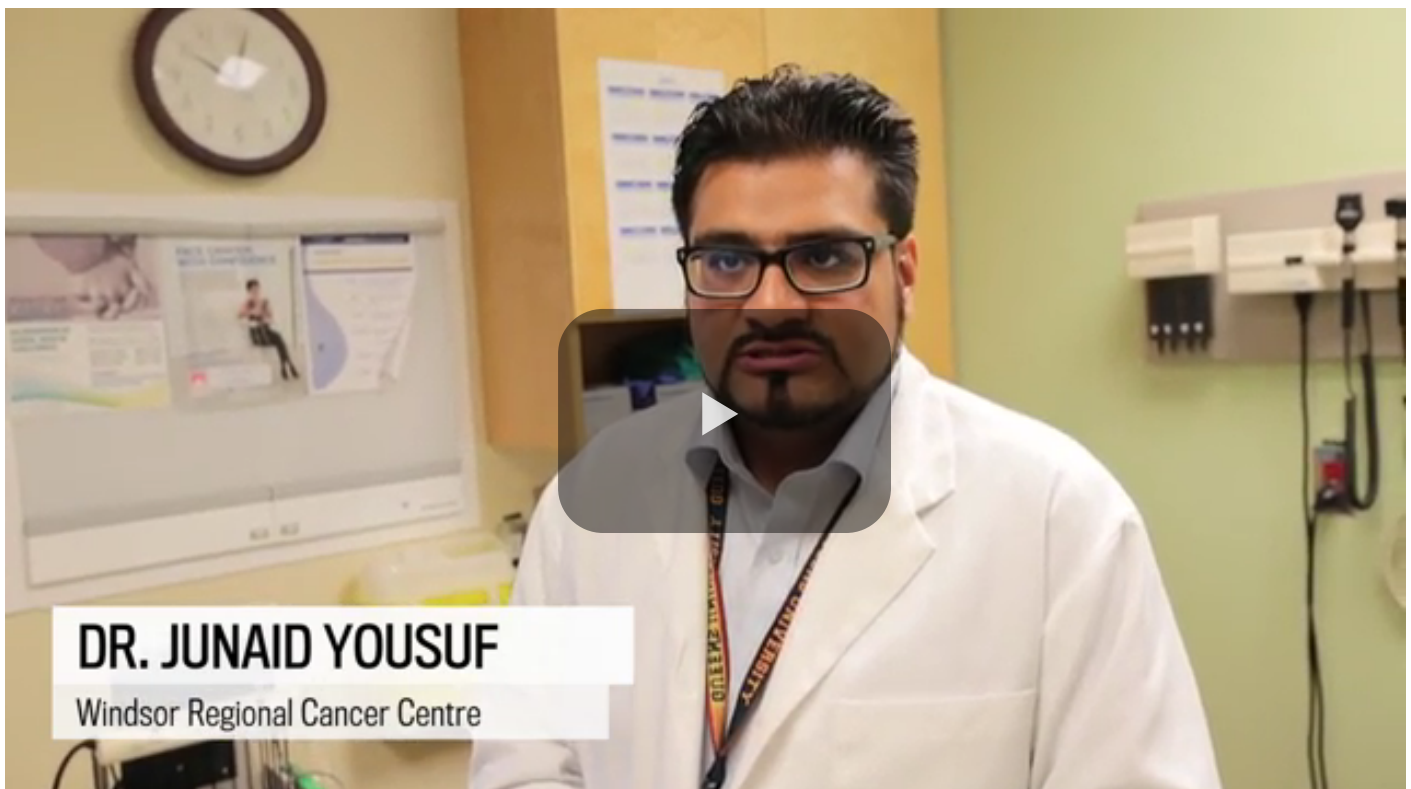
New prostate cancer treatment looks like 'a winning opportunity for all'



BRIAN CROSS, WINDSOR STAR

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A clinical trial testing a new radiation treatment for prostate cancer has the potential to improve this area's lower-than-average survival rate.

"I would hope so," says Dr. Junaid Yousuf, a radiation oncologist at

Windsor Regional Hospital's cancer program who is leading the research into stereotactic ablative body radiation in Windsor, one of 14 cancer centres across the country involved in the [clinical trial](http://www.prostatecure.ca/sabr.html) (<http://www.prostatecure.ca/sabr.html>).

This is the third phase after research at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital from 2006 to 2014 showed that replacing the standard radiation treatment of 39 sessions over eight weeks with five treatments of "high precision, high dose" SABR resulted in:

- Better cure rates.
- Fewer side-effects.
- Increased convenience for patients because they have one-eighth the number of treatments.
- Increased efficiency (patient capacity increases by 600 per cent).
- And lower costs. The cost of treating a prostate patient drops from \$6,987 for 39 sessions to \$1,470 for five SABR treatments.

"On the surface (based on the Sunnybrook research) it appears it's a winning opportunity for all," Yousuf said.

In the coming months, after final approval for the clinical trial to begin in Windsor, prostate cancer patients who are in the low-risk or intermediate-risk categories will be recruited.

Their current cure rate is between 80 and 85 per cent, but the Sunnybrook research shows cure rates between 93 and 99 per cent for SABR, according to Yousuf. The Erie St. Clair health region (Windsor-Essex, Chatham-Kent and Sarnia-Lambton) has the highest incidence of prostate cancer in Ontario, 10 per cent higher than the provincial average, and the survival rate is lower.

SABR uses a significantly higher dose of radiation that is aimed very precisely on the tumour, thanks to newer developments in imaging. This ensures that less radiation is scattered or splashed onto the surrounding area, so the common side-effects of radiation for prostate cancer patients — bowel and bladder issues as well as sexual dysfunction — are reduced. Ninety-six per cent of SABR patients retain their sexual function, according to results from the Sunnybrook study.

The Windsor cancer program treats 200 to 250 prostate cancer patients annually, and about 100 of the ones with low-risk or intermediate-risk prostate cancer will be eligible to participate in the study. But that doesn't mean they'll all get SABR. The participants will be divided into a group receiving SABR and another group receiving the standard 39-treatment radiation, so the results can be compared.



Up to now, the science is signalling the superiority of SABR, Yousuf said, but to prove that superiority, you have to do clinical trials in real-world settings.

"They may get the experimental treatment or they may not, and they have to be comfortable with that," said Yousuf. By participating, patients will be contributing to investigative science and helping patients down the road, he said. "That's how medicine works, that's how we are where we are today, because people participated generously in clinical trials."

Much of the funding for the clinical trial comes from proceeds from

the [Telus Motorcycle Ride For Dad](http://support.pcff.ca/site/TR?fr_id=1499&pg=entry). (http://support.pcff.ca/site/TR?fr_id=1499&pg=entry) The Windsor ride runs Sunday starting at 10 a.m. at the Festival Plaza on the downtown riverfront. So far, the ride has raised more than \$18 million to fight prostate cancer, the most common men's cancer.

"One in seven Canadian men will be diagnosed with (prostate cancer) and 12 men will die from it today," Ride for Dad's national president Garry Janz said in a statement, urging everyone to get involved in the fight. "By participating in the Telus Ride For Dad, you'll be driving us closer to a cure."

Dr. Yousuf said SABR could be the "way of the future" for treating favourable (low-risk and intermediate-risk) prostate cancer. He said once this treatment becomes more established, it could be expanded to higher-risk prostate cancers. It is already being used to treat lung cancer in Windsor, and there's potential for it to be used in the future for other cancers including brain, liver, kidney and spine cancers.

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