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Cancer treatment on Guam gets an upgrade

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by Janjeera Hail

Guam - Just four months ago, the future of cancer treatment on Guam looked bleak when it appeared the island's only oncologist might be leaving for good. But it now appears local patients might finally getting the world-class treatment they need right here on island.

The island recently celebrated the arrival of a second medical oncologist and it appears even more milestones are on the horizon for cancer care on Guam. With Dr. Chen Huang now assisting Dr. Sam Friedman at the Cancer Center of Guam, Friedman says there will be more time to devote to plans for a comprehensive island cancer center.

The Edward M. Calvo CANCER FOUNDATION "GUAM IS GOOD."

"What is meant is that all the specialties concerning cancer are covered under one roof. In this case it'll be not one roof but a couple of roofs, but basically all the involved specialties to give the best cancer care are going to be present," Friedman told KUAM News.

That will include medical oncology or chemotherapy at the Cancer Center of Guam, imaging at the Guam Radiation Center, pathology with Queens Hospital in Hawaii, and radiation therapy at the Island Cancer Center.

Island Cancer Center Administrator Colin O'Connell says the center will finish training by the end of March and plan to open in the first weeks of April, saying, "We're going to be giving both photon and electron treatments for solid tumors. It will give people the ability to receive state of the art radiation therapy on Guam."

Along with comprehensive care, Friedman also plans to help establish a tumor board, a treatment planning approach where doctors from different specialties review and discuss the patient's condition and planning options. "This way," he explained, "you have your expert doctors cooperating into a conference that discusses the patient properly in the sense of what is the best treatment, what is the best sequence, etc."

With all these elements coming together, local patients may no longer have to look off-island for treatment, as the island medical community continues to elevate cancer treatment on Guam.

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