

# Cancer treatment center to reopen at Fermilab

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NAPERVILLE — Rahel Kent was so desperate to get another opinion on her cancer prognosis that she went to nine doctors.

But they all told her the same thing: she would have to lose two-thirds of her tongue to get rid of the salivary cancer.

Now, nine years later, Kent still has her tongue. And not the cancer.

The California native discovered a unique treatment that was only performed in a few places in the nation, including Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia.

That cancer treatment center at Fermilab treated more than 3,000 patients in the nearly three decades before it closed in May 2003. In January, the center will reopen and treat up to 145 patients a year.

Northern Illinois University announced Monday it will open the Institute for Neutron Therapy at Fermilab, where experts will research and perform a little-known but highly effective type of cancer treatment, neutron therapy.

Neutron therapy is a form of radiation that uses neutrons instead of electrons or photons, which are used in conventional radiation treatments. It is most effective for large tumors that don't respond well to other treatments and is the treatment of choice for certain types of cancer, including locally advanced prostate cancer, locally advanced head and neck tumors and cancer of the salivary glands.

U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert worked to secure congressional appropriations of \$2.7 million over three years to fund the institute.

Officials hope the institute will be self-sustaining after the federal money has been used, said Dr. Aidnag Diaz, medical director of the institute, at Monday's announcement at the Northern Illinois University satellite campus in Naperville.

The center previously was funded by Provena St. Joseph Hospital in Elgin but closed when the hospital no longer could finance it.

"The clinic at Fermilab has provided a viable, important treatment option to thousands of patients, and we couldn't let it disappear," Hastert said.

The treatment is only available at Fermilab and two other sites in the United States because the equipment is very expensive and has not been commercially developed for medical purposes. Fermilab already had the necessary technology.

Patients who receive neutron therapy usually require 12 treatments over four weeks, compared to 30 to 40 treatments over eight weeks required for conventional radiation.

Neutron therapy is not a new discovery. It was first administered in 1938 at the University of California at Berkeley. But clinical trials were halted shortly after because the equipment was converted for isotope production for the war. International clinical trials began in the mid-1970s.

The reopening of the clinic at Fermilab will allow researchers to answer many questions that were left open when the original clinical trials were halted.

NIU researchers plan to study the effectiveness of neutron therapy on other types of cancer or in combination with other treatments. They also will explore the effects of treatment, map out cancer-related genes and work toward developing new drugs.

A partner in the project, Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield will admit patients who need extra hospital care as needed.

For more information on the Institute for Neutron Therapy at Fermilab, go to [www.neutrontherapy.niu.edu](http://www.neutrontherapy.niu.edu).