



A team of medical specialists gathers for the first Novalis® Shaped Beam Surgery™ treatment at the Regional Cancer Center. Shown (from left) are Joseph P. Miller, M.D., medical director of radiation oncology at Southeast Missouri Hospital; Darrell Wolf, certified medical dosimetrist with the hospital; Scott R. Gibbs, M.D., Cape Girardeau neurosurgeon; Timothy D. Solberg, Ph.D., professor of medical physics at UCLA in Los Angeles; Sam Hancock, Ph.D., chief medical physicist at Southeast; and Kevin A. Vaught, M.D., and Paul J. Tolentino, M.D., both Cape Girardeau neurosurgeons.

adapted,” says Sam Hancock, Ph.D., chief medical physicist at Southeast, “but we went a huge step further to add Novalis, which is specifically designed to treat small tumors with exquisite accuracy.”

Joseph P. Miller, M.D., Southeast’s medical director of radiation oncology, notes that first-generation devices such as the Gamma Knife treat a malignant lesion with multiple circular beams of radiation. This result of overlapping the circular beams is that some areas of a

tumor receive more than the prescribed radiation dose, and other areas receive less. During treatment, Novalis steadily moves around the patient’s body so that the radiation penetrates the tumor from many different angles. The

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tumor receives the full prescription dose of radiation, but surrounding healthy tissue is protected from the radiation, reducing potential damage to delicate structures such as the brainstem, optic nerves and spinal cord. Novalis also allows for precise image-guided intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) for prostate cancer. “This technology will be of great value in treating prostate cancer, as well as other complex cancers,” Miller says.

### Distinguishing Factors

The expertise and experience of Southeast’s radiation oncology team also strongly differentiate it from other stereotactic radiosurgery surgery centers. Southeast’s radiation oncology team has 140 years of combined experience in treating cancer patients. “When it comes to treating cancer patients, only the best will do,” Miller emphasizes. “Patients who turn to us for cancer treatment can be assured that they are receiving quality care from a caring and highly credentialed and experienced staff.”

Timothy D. Solberg, Ph.D., was responsible for the installation of the world’s first Novalis system at UCLA in 1997. Solberg also led Miller; Gibbs; Hancock; Darrell Wolf, certified medical dosimetrist at Southeast; Kevin A. Vaught, M.D.; and Paul J. Tolentino, M.D.; both of whom practice with Gibbs at the Brain and NeuroSpine Clinic in Cape Girardeau, through intensive Novalis training at UCLA.

“Novalis has completely changed the way we do radiosurgery at UCLA,” Solberg says. “It will open many new avenues at Southeast as well. The future for treating many kinds of cancers with this technology is very promising.”

The Longs are grateful Novalis was here when their need arose.

### Coming Through

Less than a week after his Novalis treatment, Long says he was back to tending his three horses and three mules. He recalls meeting with Gibbs to discuss treatment options. “Dr. Gibbs said, ‘Thank the good Lord, Novalis is here.’ I wasn’t a bit nervous or scared. I was just ready to go.”

“We knew that Novalis was the right thing to do,” says Long’s daughter, Donna Yeargain. “We wholeheartedly trusted the treatment team. It was not a difficult decision to make.” Although the family could have chosen to travel outside the region for care, Yeargain says the family wanted to be at Southeast. “We’ve been treated so wonderfully—by the doctors, the nurses, everyone.”

Of his physicians—Gibbs and Miller—Long says, “They’re both real guys.” His wife agrees, adding, “We look upon them not just as doctors but as friends. It’s like we’ve known both of them all our lives.” ■

**“Novalis is a very specialized technology that requires real teamwork, not just a team of experts, and I believe Southeast’s team is committed to working together on every case for the benefit of the patient.” —Timothy D. Solberg, Ph.D., professor of Medical Physics, UCLA**



### Why Novalis?

- Novalis is extremely precise and accurate, thereby minimizing radiation damage to healthy tissue.
- Novalis ensures that the tumor or lesion receives an even distribution of the prescribed radiation dose by shaping the beam to accurately match the contours of the tumor or lesion.
- Novalis is non-invasive, with no incisions and no scarring.
- Novalis is painless, and treatment is usually performed on an outpatient basis.
- Novalis allows a complete treatment session to take place in a single day for some tumors. The treatment team will decide whether the treatment will be given in a single dose.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Francis Long, who died Sept. 10, 2004. It is written with deep gratitude to Mr. Long and his family for their courage and faith that has left a lasting impression on the Regional Cancer Center team.