

Doctors Wary of Overtreatment for Thyroid Tumors

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An international panel of 24 thyroid pathologists recently released important new treatment guidelines for a subtype of the most common form of thyroid tumor, which had been described as a cancer but isn't cancerous at all. Experts also say the current standard of surgery and radiation therapy for the condition is now considered overly aggressive, often unnecessary and even possibly harmful, [Philly.com reports](#).

Doctors reclassified a tumor that grows on the thyroid gland, located in front of the neck, from "encapsulated follicular variant of papillary thyroid carcinoma" to "noninvasive follicular thyroid neoplasm with papillary-like nuclear features," or NIFT-P for short. Translated, this means that because the tumor is entirely encased in a fibrous capsule, its cells have not developed the ability to invade other parts of the body, a classic sign of malignant cancers.

Experts argued that the term "carcinoma" in the tumor's original name wrongly suggested that the condition warranted serious treatment that might not be required. The change in the disease's classification, which has since been adopted by the World Health Organization, is expected to affect the treatment guidelines for nearly 15 percent of thyroid cancer patients in Europe and America, or about 10,000 of the more than 62,000 new diagnoses of the disease made every year.

The effects of this reclassification could be huge for many people with thyroid tumors. Surgery to treat these lumps often causes vocal problems, and radioiodine therapy can trigger serious dental and salivary issues, as well as raise the risk of developing other cancers down the line. In addition, removing the entire thyroid requires patients to undergo intensive hormone replacement therapy, which can cause heart issues, insomnia, weight gain, decreased bone density and more health problems.

The decision of these thyroid cancer experts follows a recent study of 109 thyroid cancer patients with encapsulated tumors. Most had partial thyroid removal, while the rest had total removal. None of the patients underwent radioiodine treatment, and all were alive with no evidence of a recurrence of the disease 10 to 26 years later. Plus, the scaled-back therapies saved patients an average of \$8,000.

To learn more about thyroid cancer and its treatments, [click here](#).

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