



JESSICA A. WOOLF | THE TIMES

Bille Childress, Connie Adams, Laurel Valetino and Dr. Hytem Rifai stand near the Gamma Knife Thursday at Methodist Hospitals South Lake Campus in Merrillville.

That's not a knife

Methodist Hospitals
mark 5th anniversary of
GAMMA TECHNOLOGY

BY SUSAN ERLER
serler@nwtimes.com
219.548.4349

MERRILLVILLE | Connie Adams chalked up her shortness of breath to a pulmonary problem until she experienced a symptom she couldn't ignore.

After a dinner out with her mother earlier this year, Adams, 67, a resident of the Black Oak section of Gary, coughed up blood.

Doctors diagnosed her with lung cancer and also found the trio

WHAT IS GAMMA KNIFE TREATMENT?

Not a knife at all, the Gamma Knife device invented 40 years ago by a Swedish neurosurgeon aims gamma radiation through a target point in the patient's skull. During the past five years, a Methodist team of specialists has used the technology to treat tumors, brain disorders and some forms of severe facial pain and other conditions.

of brain lesions that made Adams a candidate for the gamma knife.

Not long afterward, she became one of nearly 255 patients to undergo Gamma Knife treatment at the Methodist Hospitals

Southlake Campus in Merrillville since the technology's 2003 arrival there.

Not a knife at all, the Gamma Knife device invented 40 years ago by a Swedish neurosurgeon aims

gamma radiation through a target point in the patient's skull.

Up to 201 radiation beams are delivered through a helmet to pinpoint the target site.

During the past five years, a Methodist team of specialists has used the technology to treat tumors, brain disorders and some forms of severe facial pain and other conditions, said Laurel Valentino, director of the hospital's Neuroscience Institute Center.

See **GAMMA, D2**

PAGE E2 | SATURDAY . OCTOBER 18 . 2008 | RO

Gamma

Continued from E1

Methodist hospital invested \$3.1 million five years ago to build the center housing the Gamma Knife and an array of neurological and oncology services. Earlier this year, it infused another \$1 million to upgrade the gamma knife, one of only two in Indiana.

To celebrate, the hospital invited the public to view the technology at open houses earlier this week and again on Oct. 23.

Neurosurgeon Hytham Rifai said is one of a team of surgeons, radiologists and physicians who meet regularly to determine the best candidates for Gamma Knife treatment.

"The patients benefit from the multi-disciplinary approach," Rifai said. "We all discuss one patient, each

from a different aspect."

The Gamma Knife's precision is what makes it "the gold standard" for treating many kinds of brain tumors, Neuroscience Institute Director Laurel Valentino said.

"When it delivers that cobalt, it's very specific to that area," leaving nearby tissue untouched, Valentino said.

Patients are able to return quickly to regular daily activity, Valentino said.

Though a little frightened at first, Adams said she emerged from her Gamma Knife treatment without so much as a headache.

A former preschool teacher, Adams continues to receive radiation and chemotherapy for the lung cancer she said was likely caused by years of smoking.