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Innovative New Treatments For Head & Neck Cancer



Christopher Long, MD



Michael Nordstrom, MD

At leading cancer centers around the country, new and evolving technologies are changing the way physicians treat head and neck cancers, and helping patients avoid some of the pain and suffering that accompanies the disease.

Head and neck cancer experts Christopher Long, MD, and Michael Nordstrom, MD, lead the effort at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, using minimally-invasive technologies such as transoral laser microsurgery and CyberKnife® radiosurgery.

"The majority of otolaryngologists in private practice don't work in tertiary care facilities such as Aurora St. Luke's. So they aren't doing the more complex cases," explains Dr. Long. "And that's where our expertise comes into play. At Aurora St. Luke's we take care of some of the more complicated benign and malignant processes that occur in the head and neck."

Transoral laser microsurgery is one of the innovative new treatments being performed at Aurora St. Luke's. In the procedure, a microscope and laser are used to view and remove cancerous tissue. All of the instruments reach the surgical site through the mouth, avoiding the need for traditional open surgery. Importantly, the procedure has significantly less impact on the patient, in both the short and long-term.

Another innovative treatment tool currently being used for certain head and neck tumors is the CyberKnife radiosurgery system. The CyberKnife is extremely precise and uses focused beams of radiation and sub-millimeter accuracy to treat the most complex tumors. Because CyberKnife treatment is minimally invasive, it often is used on tumors that are difficult to reach or would otherwise require the removal of large amounts of tissue. CyberKnife treatment is less painful than traditional surgery and no anesthesia or incisions are required.

"Many referring physicians aren't aware of these important new treatments for head and neck cancer," says Dr. Long. "And some aren't even aware that this level of specialty exists at Aurora St. Luke's."

"Here we have the privilege of working with physicians from other specialties, all under the same roof: radiation oncologists, hematology oncologists, cardiothoracic physicians, and neurosurgeons. We all work together. It makes a big difference."

To learn more about the advanced treatments available for head and neck cancer at Aurora St. Luke's, please contact our Second Opinion Program at 888-649-6892.

The philanthropic efforts of Judy Gardetto and her late husband, John, helped bring the CyberKnife to Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center.

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