

## **MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS** **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

TOPIC: REGAINING A SINGING VOICE AFTER CANCER  
REPORT: MB #4767

**BACKGROUND:** Vocal cord cancer starts as small areas of abnormal cells that undergo sequential changes which then lead to the development of cancer. Precancerous lesions may appear as a white or red plaque on the vocal cord. These findings on an exam will result in a biopsy or removal of the lesion to rule out the presence of cancer. An estimated 10,000 cases of vocal cord cancer are diagnosed nationally each year. It's closely linked with a history of smoking, though nonsmokers may get vocal cord cancer as well. Fortunately, vocal cord cancers typically present early because the lesion creates hoarseness that often prompts early evaluation.

(Source: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/vocal-cord-cancer>)

**DIAGNOSING:** Some symptoms of vocal cord cancer can include voice change; chronic sore throat; trouble swallowing with associated weight loss; trouble breathing; sensation of something stuck in the throat; the appearance of one or more lumps that can be felt in the neck; and coughing up blood. Treatment recommendation varies on the location and size of the tumor. Treatment options include surgery to completely remove the cancerous growth while preserving as much normal tissue as possible. Surgery can often be performed through the mouth but occasionally an open surgery through the neck is needed. Radiation therapy is another treatment designed to kill the cancerous cells. The entire voice box is treated at the same time. While this technology has dramatically improved over the years, doses of radiation needed for definitive treatment of a vocal cord cancer can still sometimes lead to long-term voice and swallowing problems.

(Source: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/vocal-cord-cancer>)

**LASER PROCEDURE TREATS EARLY CANCER:** Semirra Bayan, MD, assistant professor of surgery at the University of Chicago Medicine, is an expert in using an innovative potassium titanyl phosphate (KTP) laser procedure to treat early vocal cord cancers. This procedure targets the blood vessels of the cancer while preserving the underlying healthy tissue underneath the cancer. Under a microscope, ultranarrow margins are obtained as the laser slowly removes the cancer layer by layer until healthy tissue is reached. This allows for preservation of normal healthy vocal cord tissue. This treatment is as effective as radiation therapy in treating early vocal cord cancers. And following surgery there are no additional side effects. The benefit is that you preserve all the healthy tissue not involved with cancer and do not have the same issues with swallowing that you can see in patients who have had radiation.

(Source: <https://www.uchicagomedicine.org/forefront/cancer-articles/ktp-laser-procedure-treats-early-vocal-cord-cancer>)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**If this story or any other Ivanhoe story has impacted your life or prompted you or someone you know to seek or change treatments, please let us know by contacting Marjorie Bekaert Thomas at [mthomas@ivanhoe.com](mailto:mthomas@ivanhoe.com)**