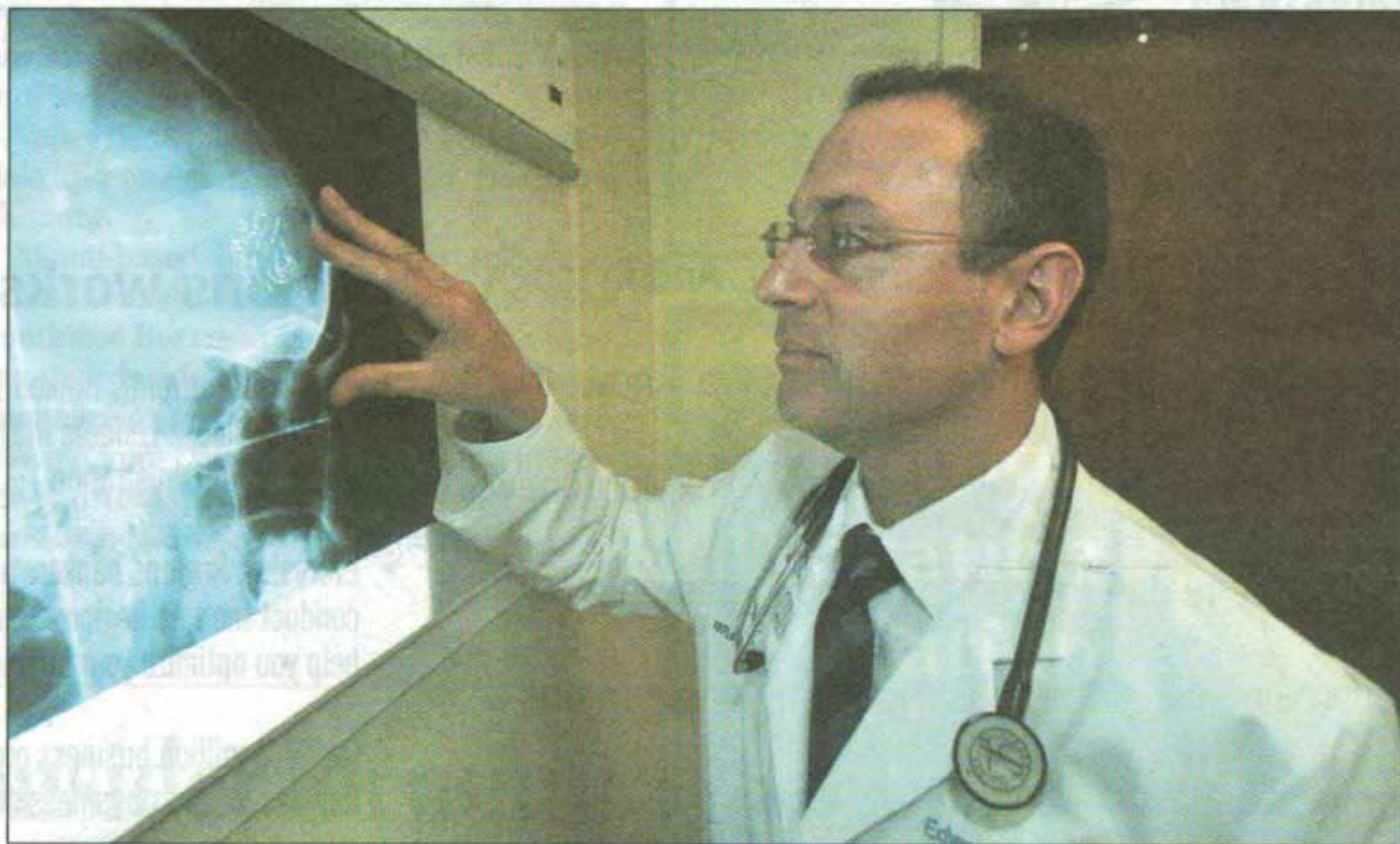


South Florida BUSINESS JOURNAL



MARK FREERKS

Dr. Edward Kaplan is developing a new treatment for patients with brain cancer.

Medical research practice launches

BY BRIAN BANDELL

At a time when most businesses are cutting back, Dr. Edward J. Kaplan is moving forward.

He has invested in advanced equipment and medical records systems at his new practice, 1st Line Oncology in Coconut Creek, as he funds the development of a cancer treatment.

Despite the fact that fewer people have health insurance and can afford to pay for costly cancer

treatments, Kaplan recently created his practice in a 7,500-square-foot office in a new building. Now, he's competing with major investments in cancer treatment facilities by Broward Health and Boca Raton Community Hospital.

The challenge doesn't faze Kaplan, he says. After all, helping people fight cancer is a more daunting task.

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MEDICAL: Practice is likely to receive some stimulus Medicare money

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"It's going to pan out because there is nothing like it anywhere in the tri-county area," Kaplan said of 1st Line Oncology.

His company bought the office condo in late June for \$2.7 million and opened about a month later. Ironstone Bank financed nearly the entire purchase amount.

Kaplan spent \$3 million installing a linear accelerator with a computerized tomography (CT) scan beam. It lets him see the tumors and aim the radiation accordingly.

The treatment room was designed to be less stressful than most radiation therapy rooms. The bulky parts of the machine, such as the cooling system that usually makes the room cold, are in another room. Patients can control a flat-screen TV above the treatment table.

"We want to make them feel comfortable and relaxed, and help them pass the time during the treatment," he said.

STAFF EXPECTED TO GROW

Kaplan also invested in electronic medical records, tablet computers and biometric check-in for patients, so his office is paperless. That should help him secure bonus payments from Medicare that were included in the stimulus bill.

His office currently has a staff of seven. He plans to hire another physician by the end of the year, plus more staff members.

While he runs his oncology practice, Kaplan is working on the development of a new cancer treatment. He has designed plastic "seeds" that would time-release a high concentration of chemotherapy drug into the tumor and a contrast agent that would help doctors identify the location of the tumor during radiation treatment. He is testing it first for brain cancer.

Currently, oncologists can glue a dime-size disk into the body that time-releases chemotherapy drugs following brain cancer surgery. Since Kaplan's seeds would be 4.5 millimeters long and 0.8 millimeters wide - about the size of a cupcake sprinkle - they could be im-



Dr. Edward Kaplan uses the linear accelerator, left, and demonstrates how his treatment might work to combat brain cancer, below.

PHOTOS BY MARK FREERKS

1ST LINE ONCOLOGY

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planted directly into tumors, he said.

In half of brain cancer cases, surgery is not possible and the patient is treated with radiation and chemotherapy pills, but that delivers less than 1 percent of the drug to the tumors and often extend life by just two to three months, Kaplan said. He believes his seeds would target a much higher dose of drugs to the tumor with a minimal amount leaking into the rest of the body. This should improve treatment and allow for the development of chemotherapy drugs that had been ruled out



because their side effects were too harsh, Kaplan said.

Enterprise Florida awarded Kaplan a \$3,000 Phase 0 grant with state dollars to

help him apply for a National Institutes of Health small business innovation grant. If he wins the federal grant, he could receive up to \$300,000 over two years and then up to \$3 million over three years if his treatment meets its milestones.

"The only problem for me is I'm limited, for funding reasons, to developing it for one disease at a time, instead of six or eight diseases," Kaplan said. "I'm willing to license it for a dollar to a university or lab that wants it for another purpose besides brain tumors."

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