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SMART TALK

# New frontiers open in fight against cancer

**Leslie Goldman**

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A painless, non-invasive test for breast cancer may soon be available.

The test involves placing a suction cup over the nipple and expressing fluid from the breast ducts. The fluid would then be tested for specific sugars that can indicate the presence of cancer.

International Medical Innovations Inc., an Ontario-based biotechnology firm, is developing the test.

"Eighty to 85 percent of breast cancers arise from the ducts," said Dr. Anees Chagpar, assistant professor in the University of Louisville (Kentucky) division of surgical oncology, who led initial-- and promising--tests at IMI and Houston's MD Anderson Cancer Center. Chagpar said the test is not a substitute for mammograms, and the study (now being run through the University of Louisville) is in the process of a larger trial.

On a related note, an innovative form of radiation treatment called TomoTherapy provides precise delivery to tumor sites (breast and other), minimizing damage to healthy surrounding tissue. Cancer Treatment Centers of America at Midwestern Regional Medical Center in Zion is the only hospital in the state offering this system. The technology provides 3-D images that allow physicians to better calculate patient dosage, reducing common side effects such as exhaustion.