

# Latest equipment available to KZN cancer patients

**BARBARA COLE**

ADDINGTON Hospital cancer patients are to get the most advanced cancer treatment available in the world.

The arrival of the latest state-of-art technology means they will get quicker, more effective and more accurate treatment than ever before.

Two new treatment machines, known as RapidArc, which have arrived from the US, are the only ones to be installed in a hospital in Africa.

They are at the heart of the hospital's fully digital oncology unit, which has been closed for seven months for an upgrade programme, including installation of the machines.

Patients were referred to Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital during the upgrade.

"Previously, KZN has been neglected, and this is a sign that the government means business. It is a sign that the government takes health care seriously and wants to bring the best to its citizens," said Professor Amo Jordaan, head of oncology in KZN.

Describing the new machines as "amazing", he

said the modern era of oncology began in 1980. Back then, he said, "it was guessology – now it is true to life".

With the new machines capable of treating 120 patients a day, Jordaan hopes the 30 staff will soon be able to get on top of the waiting list, which sometimes extends to three months.

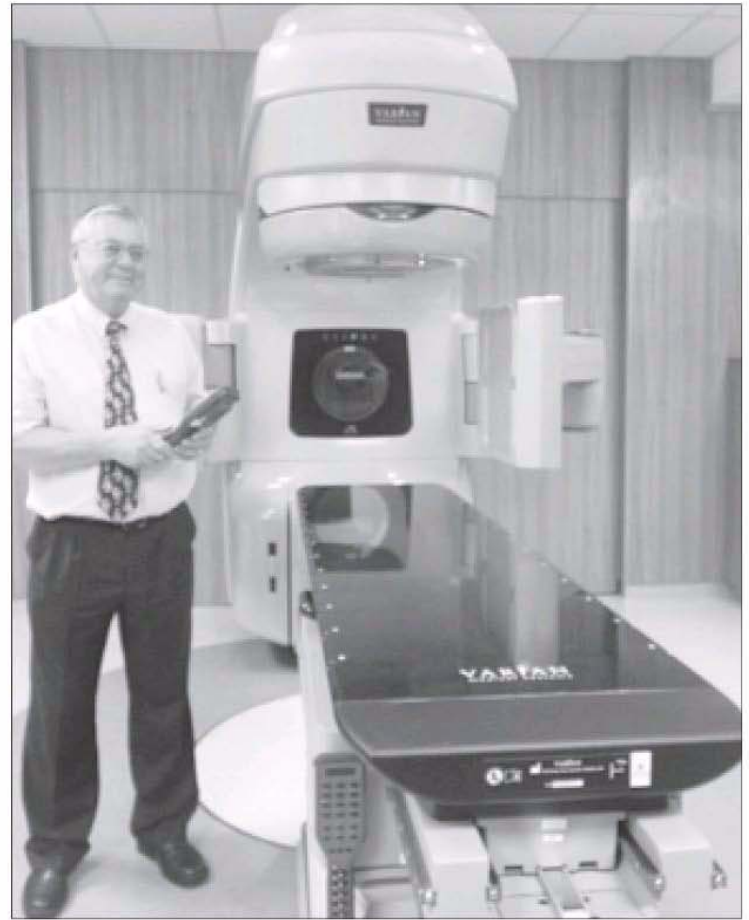
The new-look unit cost more than R100-million. It was financed from a special grant from the national government.

Now patients will be greeted by welcoming surroundings with comfortable chairs, a flat-screen TV and scenic KZN pictures on the walls.

And when they lie on the treatment beds for radiation, they will see giant illuminated pictures of KZN on the ceiling, an idea imported from the US.

Jordaan said the machines meant that higher doses of radiation can be given to treat cancer cells in a shorter space of time without damaging healthy tissue.

It now takes 20 minutes to plan treatment (compared to three days) and the RapidArc technology will routinely radiate patients with complicated



**STATE OF THE ART: Professor Amo Jordaan, head of oncology in KZN, demonstrates the new cancer treatment technology at Addington Hospital.**

PICTURE: PURI DEVJEE

cancer in under two minutes.

Citing tonsil cancer, Jordaan said that as the organ was close to the saliva glands, the brain and the spinal cord, "you have to be very careful not to damage those organs during treatment".

But now, with a concentrated beam of radiation from

the machines on the tonsil area, "you can leave the other organs out of the radiation field to a large extent".

The new technology will be maintained by Tecmed Africa.