

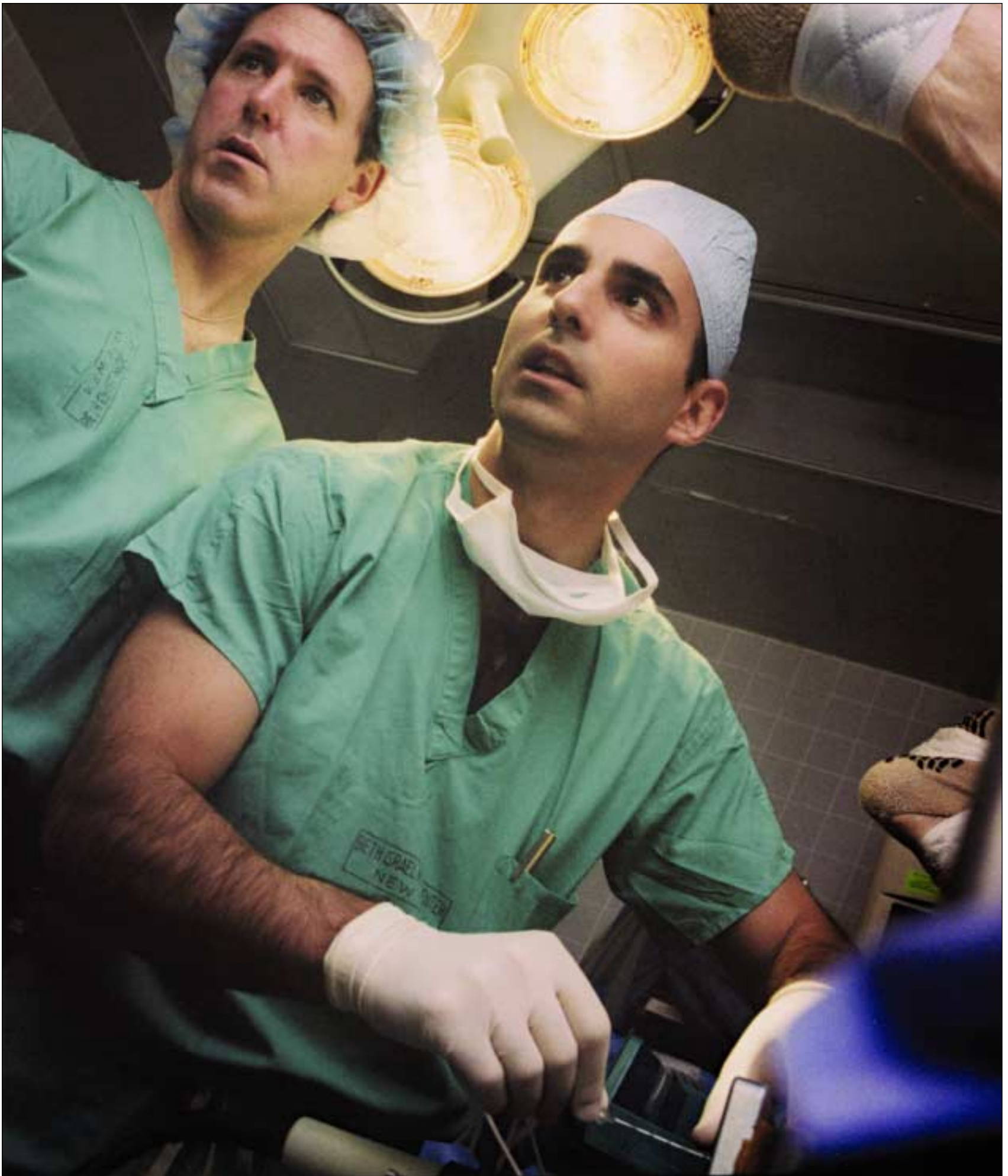
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MED UPDATE™

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Teaming Up to Battle Prostate Cancer

Like many men diagnosed with prostate cancer, Stuart Yammer felt confused about his treatment options and potential side effects. "I ran from a surgeon to a radiation oncologist, numerous times. As I left each doctor, whatever he had advised was what I was going to do, until I saw the next doctor."

Fortunately, Stuart Yammer found help in a unique program at Beth Israel Medical Center where surgeons and radiation oncologists are teaming up to provide simultaneous consultations for patients trying to make health and quality of life decisions.

"The intent of the program is to offer a refuge away from the biases, confusion and plethora of information that is out there through multiple sources," explains **Dr. Daniel Shasha**, Attending Physician in Radiation Oncology with the Continuum Cancer Centers of New York. Sorting out lots of complicated and competing information is one reason the average time between diagnosis and treatment in New York State is four months. "That's too long and may be a danger to patients' health," says Dr. Shasha. "More importantly, it's emotionally and physically very tough on patients and the people who support them."

The design of the program is to streamline the whole process by bringing the patient into one setting where he can have his diagnosis reviewed, prognosis explained and treatment options laid out before him in one visit by a specialist in surgery and a specialist in radiation oncology, working together. "They made it easier to make a tough decision," says Stuart Yammer, who made a decision to have surgery 24 hours following his joint consultation.

Continuum Cancer Centers offer a complete range of treatment options, which can be tailored to each patient's situation after considering the patient's age, past medical history and a host of other factors. "Prostate cancer as a clinical entity is unique in the sense that we have multiple treatment options that are very different from one another. The cure rates are equivalent. The difference really is in the potential side effects," explains **Dr. Joseph R. Wagner**, Physician-in-Charge of Urologic Oncol-

ogy at Beth Israel Medical Center.

Some of these treatment options are observation, open radical or nerve-sparing prostatectomy, laparoscopic radical or cryotherapy, hormonal therapy, three-dimensional conformal external beam therapy, permanent radioactive seed implants, and temporary high dose rate seed implants.

Only a few other health care facilities in the country offer similar one-stop shopping because it is time consuming for doctors. "It's a model we hope other hospitals that can support such a program, will strive toward," says Dr. Shasha.

The team approach eliminates competition between specialists for patients.

"We care what they pick, but at the same time we don't care what they pick—because they can't make a wrong decision," states Dr. Wagner. Dr. Wagner reports that patients who visit the program often make treatment decisions within a week or so following the joint consultation. They also choose between surgical and radiation options on a fairly equal basis.

Another unique aspect of the Continuum Cancer Centers is that they also work closely with private physicians such as Dr. Robert Salant, an attending physician in Urology at Beth Israel Medical Center. "It's beneficial to me and to my patients," says Dr. Salant. "The joint consult makes patients feel better. If

a patient feels good about the health care providers, they tend to do better. They are more willing to follow through with care. They comply much better with treatment regimes—which are very often not easy to go through—and in the end they ultimately fare better."

As for Stuart Yammer, he happily reports that he just celebrated his third anniversary of being cancer free. ■

**Continuum Cancer Centers
of New York
(877) CANCER - MD
www.WeHealNewYork.org**

Mr. Stuart Yammer celebrates his third anniversary of being "cancer free" with Dr. Joseph Wagner.



Dr. Daniel Shasha, along with Dr. Joseph Wagner (left), perform seed implant therapy.