

My cancer treatment's straight out of Star Trek

Success of £2m machine

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PENSIONER John Madden has become one of the first men to undergo a revolutionary cancer treatment that could be straight out of Star Trek.

Mr Madden, who will be 83 in July and is a retired plastics factory machinist from Swindon, was one of the first three patients outside the Far East to have a cancerous kidney treated by High Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU), provided by a £2million Chinese machine.

The machine is groundbreaking because it passes beams of sound through the body to focus heat on the tumour and kill it, leaving surrounding healthy tissue totally undamaged.

It is a procedure reminiscent of Dr McCoy's healing beam on the Enterprise, though the imposing equipment is far less compact.

Unlike HIFU machines already in use for prostate cancer, no probe is inserted.

Under a general anaesthetic to ensure they keep still, patients lie over a small bath of degassed water which contains the high-intensity transducer delivering inaudible ultrasound beams to the tumour.

Mr Madden, who has been



Hi-tech solution: The HIFU machine

married for 51 years, said: "I had no pain at all. That's why I feel a bit of a fraud in that respect. I didn't feel a thing. I had no side-effects afterwards, nothing at all."

"I lay in bed and when the doctor came to see me, he said: 'You can go home tomorrow'."

"I've had no trouble since, and when I had an MRI scan last year I was told the tumour had been dead for 18 months and was beginning to shrink."

His treatment was administered by Professor Feng Wu, visiting research scientist at the Nuffield Department of Surgery in Oxford, who was instrumental in developing the machine.

Thousands of patients in China have already benefited from the treatment, covering a broad range of solid tumours including breast cancer, liver

cancer, pancreatic cancer, soft tissue sarcoma and bone cancer.

Even where cancers may be too advanced for a cure, they can often be treated to ease pain.

The trials are continuing as the medical team attempts to gather enough data to apply for approval by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. Only then might it become available on the NHS.

"We are on the verge of doing this," said Dr James Butler, chairman of British company Ultrasound Therapeutics Limited (UTL), which supplied Oxford's machine and is funding the trials.



Cured: John Madden was told his cancer had been dead for