

Implantable Drug Pump Provides Pain Relief For Cancer Patient

(NAPSA)—In 1997, Patricia Kossie-Boliver, a 38-year-old mother of three living in Houston, Texas, was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer, the most severe kind. Though aggressive rounds of chemotherapy were used to treat the cancer in her breasts, a year later the cancer had metastasized to her sternum, ribs, spine, lower leg and hips. As the cancer spread, Kossie-Boliver began experiencing severe back pain.

“The pain in my ribs and sternum would come and go but the back pain was constant,” she remembers. “When I was in pain, I couldn’t move. I couldn’t walk. And all the medications I took for the pain made me too sleepy to do anything.”

Because the medication was proving to be ineffective at alleviating the pain, Kossie-Boliver’s oncologist, Dr. Daniel Booser of MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, referred her to his colleague, Dr. Allen Burton, an anesthesiologist and pain management specialist with MD Anderson.

“When I first saw Patricia, she had been on fentanyl patches for a year, but they made her constipated and sleepy,” says Burton. “When we tried methadone, her pain actually increased. Our backup plan was an intrathecal trial to see if she would find relief with an implantable system.”

The Medtronic SynchroMed® infusion system consisting of a programmable pump and flexible catheter, is surgically placed under the skin to deliver pain medication directly to the fluid-filled area surrounding the spinal cord. The therapy provided great pain relief without side effects. The trial went so well that Burton proceeded with



For cancer survivor Patricia Kossie-Boliver, an innovative pain management method helps her “keep pushing.”

the procedure to implant the pump.

After the procedure, Kossie-Boliver experienced some initial discomfort due to the incision in her back, but Burton told her that the pain would subside—and by the end of the week, she felt much better. So good, in fact, that less than a week after the procedure she boarded a bus headed for Orlando with her family and church group.

“Patricia’s biggest concern post-op was whether or not she would be able to go to Disney World with her family,” recalls Burton. “Four days after the procedure, off she went to the Magic Kingdom.”

“It wasn’t the smartest thing I could have done,” says Kossie-Boliver of the trip. “I just didn’t want to disappoint my family (husband Robert, son Marcus and daughters Latricia and Elaine). But I survived.”

She not only survived the trip, she’s also surviving with cancer. “Before, if I walked from my house to the street, my back would be throbbing,” she explains. “Now I

don’t have that problem. That’s a big relief to me.” She’s also relieved to be free of the side effects caused by her previous medicines, especially the constant drowsiness.

“Before I had the pump implanted, it didn’t matter how much sleep I got at night because the medication caused me to fall asleep all the time,” she says. “Now I can stay up all day!”

Results with this therapy vary. Not every patient responds to intrathecal pain therapy the way Kossie-Boliver did. In addition, while Kossie-Boliver does not experience any side effects with the therapy, they are possible. Because the pump and catheter are surgically placed, infections may occur. Problems may also occur with the pump or catheter. Some patients also experience drug-related side effects.

“Before the pump, I would often forget to change the [medicine] patch until I started feeling pain,” she explains. “Then it would take a few hours for the medication to get into my system. By that time, I would have to sit down because my back was aching. The implantable pump gives me freedom to do more.”

“I don’t like depending on people,” Kossie-Boliver admits. “When I need to do something, I do it. I keep pushing. That’s what the pump enables me to do. Before, with me hurting, I wasn’t able to push myself to keep going. Now that I don’t have the pain, I can keep pushing. As long as I’m not hurting, I can make it.”

To learn more about intrathecal pain therapy and the SynchroMed infusion system, visit www.medtronicpain.com, or call Patient Services at 1-800-510-6735.