



Powerful, Precise Treatment, Fewer Side Effects For Lung Cancer Patients

(NAPSA)—According to the American Cancer Society, lung cancer (small-cell and non-small cell) is by far the leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. The five-year survival rate is just 15 percent among those diagnosed with the disease—but recent technological advances in treatment may change all that.

Proton Therapy

About 30 to 50 percent of lung cancer patients have locally advanced tumors that require a combined treatment regimen that includes radiation therapy. Because the lungs are close to several critical structures in the body, it's challenging to deliver an adequate dose of radiation to a cancerous tumor while sparing these nearby normal tissues. That's where proton therapy has the advantage for many lung cancer patients.

Proton therapy is an advanced type of radiation treatment that uses a beam of protons to deliver radiation directly to the tumor. Its precision and ability to reduce the risk of short- and long-term side effects appealed to Chuck Martinez.

One Man's Story

In 2007, at the age of 37 and a year after surviving bladder cancer, Martinez received devastating news. A routine chest X-ray revealed a mass in his right lung, which turned out to be stage IIIA non-small-cell lung cancer.

A team of cancer experts at MD Anderson told Martinez about proton therapy and the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center. Dr. Ritsuko Komaki, the director of MD Anderson's Thoracic Radiation Oncology Program, explained how proton therapy precisely delivers high doses of powerful radiation directly to the tumor with less damage to nearby healthy organs.

"Knowing that proton therapy



Chuck Martinez, lung cancer survivor, benefited from proton therapy.

would allow my team to target the radiation directly to the tumor in my lung and protect my esophagus, spine and heart was extremely encouraging and all I needed to hear," said Martinez, who was concerned about side effects. "I knew I was going to receive the most advanced radiation treatment technology."

Dr. Komaki, who has treated many lung cancer patients with proton therapy, agrees that it is an excellent option for patients who have tumors located in sensitive areas of the body, like the lung or in the chest.

"Proton therapy allows us to precisely target the radiation just where the patient needs it," Dr. Komaki explained. "With the location of Chuck's tumor, it was critical to limit the radiation dose to surrounding areas of his body, especially since he was on concurrent chemotherapy."

Every weekday for about seven weeks, Martinez had chemotherapy at the MD Anderson main campus and proton therapy treatments at the nearby MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center. He tolerated both therapies well and was able to maintain his weight during treatment.

"The Proton Therapy Center is a state-of-the-art facility. I liked the fact that I was going to a place where they were experts in cancer and proton therapy," he said. "The staff and therapists were fantastic."

Martinez has been cancer free for more than five years. A former drummer for a cover band, he still gets together with his old bandmates to play every now and then. Most of his time, however, revolves around his wife, Lora, and their 9-year-old daughter, Mia.

He also now lives a healthier, more active lifestyle. He ran his first half marathon in 2011, raising money for the charity Can-Care, Inc., an organization whose volunteers regularly visit cancer patients.

"It was one of the hardest and yet most rewarding things I've ever done," said Martinez, who has now run several half marathons. "It is very meaningful for me to be here and to be able to share such an accomplishment with my wife after all we've been through."

Learn More

For more information about the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center, visit MDAndersonProton.com or call toll free 1-866-632-4782.