

# Professional surfer back in the water after successful surgery to treat rare bone cancer

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This is former professional surfer Richie Lovett competing before his cancer diagnosis. Credit: ASP

When professional surfer Richie Lovett began experiencing hip pain at 31, he attributed it to his athletic lifestyle. But after months of discomfort and preliminary tests, the Australian native learned the pain was caused by a cancerous tumor in his femur or thigh bone.

"As a professional athlete, I was blindsided by the news that I had cancer," said Lovett. "I realized very quickly that cancer would have a

profound effect on my life. I knew I needed an experienced oncologist to tackle this disease, so I began an international search to find the very best options and care."

The search led him from Australia to the Cedars-Sinai Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute and the care of surgical oncologist Earl Warren Brien, MD.

Brien, director of Musculoskeletal Tumor Service at the Orthopaedic Oncology Program in the Cedars-Sinai Orthopaedic Center and a lifelong surfer himself, is an expert in treating bone cancer and has pioneered many of the most groundbreaking surgical procedures in orthopedic oncology, one of which would benefit Lovett.

Brien diagnosed Lovett with a tumor called clear cell chondrosarcoma, an uncommon form of bone cancer that rarely responds to chemotherapy or radiation. Instead of therapeutic treatments, Lovett would undergo a state-of-the-art surgery to give him the best chance at surfing again.



This is Richie Lovett competing after recovering from cancer surgery. Credit: Jon Frank

The surgical technique, described recently in the journal *Orthopedics*, required Brien to remove Lovett's tumor and damaged bone in its entirety, replace it with a prosthetic and then reconnect his hip and surrounding muscle to the prosthetic implant. This innovative approach provides the greatest range of movement possible.

With standard procedures, healing can be slow and patients often need multiple follow-up surgical procedures. But when damaged bone is removed and replaced with a metal prosthesis, patients may get back to their daily activities more quickly and easily, Brien said.

"The surgical approach Richie received is unique due to the prosthetic," said Brien. "The prosthesis is made of a combination of cobalt-chrome and titanium and has a three-piece head that allows for more range of motion and greater stability. This technique gave Richie, and patients like him, a faster recovery, more predictable outcomes and better overall quality of life."



Richie Lovett, now cancer-free, is all smiles. Credit: Peter Crumpton

Eight years later, Lovett is free from the rare [bone cancer](#) and back in the water, surfing and enjoying a full life with his two young children and wife.

"I am committed to staying healthy and living a positive life," said Lovett. "I influence people wherever I can and am forever grateful to Dr. Brien for getting me back into the water."

**More information:** *Orthopedics*. 2014 February: Proximal Femoral Reconstruction With a Constrained Acetabulum in Oncologic Patients.

Provided by Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

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