

Patient survives stage IV, inoperable throat cancer in clinical trial

March 18 2016

It took a white lie to get David Polisini, 79, to a doctor in 2004, after months of being unable to swallow.

"Two of my daughters, Toni and Susie, showed up on my back porch and told me to put my jacket on," he says. "They told me we were just going for a ride, but the next thing I knew, we were pulling into the Clermont Mercy Hospital."

Polisini says tests ordered in the emergency room uncovered a tumor in his throat.

"It was the size of a golf ball," he says, adding that he then scheduled an appointment with his [primary care physician](#), Francis Dumont, MD. "I was then referred to an ear, nose and throat physician within his group who said I needed to see someone at the University of Cincinnati (UC) Cancer Institute."

A biopsy was performed, and a diagnosis was confirmed—it was Stage IV cancer.

"I began seeing Dr. (Bill) Barrett who explained that I would need to go through very aggressive radiation along with chemotherapy five days a week for three months," he says. "I'd drive myself every day to every visit in my little Miata. The therapy really zapped my strength, but I'm here because of it."

"I really don't think I realized how much trouble I was in with Stage IV inoperable cancer, but I knew I had to do what I had to do to get through it."

The radiation and chemo regimen was a Phase III clinical trial at UC, studying the effects of the use of both radiation and chemotherapy for advanced head and neck cancers.

Besides his family, Polisini credits Barrett, chair and professor of the UC Department of Radiation Oncology and director of the UC Cancer Institute, as well as the staff and care providers at the Barrett Center, where he received treatment, with being a tremendous support.

"Dr. Barrett was there with me every step of the way," he says. "He was so dedicated to helping me, as were the other nurses and staff at UC. I'm just so impressed with everyone who works there. They stood by me the whole time, and more than 10 years later, I'm doing fine, and the [cancer](#) hasn't come back. To me, Dr. Barrett is an angel come to Earth."

The clinical trial seems to have worked, and Polisini, who lives in Clermont County, says that while he has a primarily liquid diet, he doesn't regret a thing.

"By golly, I'll trade the ability to eat with the ability to get up every morning," he says. "I have the energy to do the things I want and have to do. I go to the 'Y' every other day to exercise. I do my own house and lawn work. I just put a new floor on my front porch. I can only do these things because of the outstanding treatment I received at the UC Cancer Institute and the Barrett Center."

And he warns others to not ignore symptoms, like he did.

"If you have something wrong, see a doctor right away, unlike I did," he

says. "I'm just thankful for my daughters and Dr. Barrett for helping me."

Provided by University of Cincinnati

Citation: Patient survives stage IV, inoperable throat cancer in clinical trial (2016, March 18)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-03-patient-survives-stage-iv-inoperable.html>

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