In the News

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CyberKnife Centers OF TAMPA BAY

Beating Cancer with CyberKnife

Our patient featured in The Tampa Tribune

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"I REFUSED TO LET CANCER BEAT ME"

Harvey Siegel, 74, Spring Hill

GOAL:

To beat prostate cancer and put it behind me

WHY I DID IT:

When I was first diagnosed, my prostate-specific antigen (PSA) level was 11, much higher than the normal range. I had just lost my wife to cancer and I refused to let cancer beat me. My plan was to go in and get it taken care of and then put it behind me.

In 2003, I had radiosurgery on a meningioma that was pressing against my optic nerve. Although I knew something needed to be done quickly, I wasn't comfortable with the idea of being cut open. My doctor offered the option of radiosurgery, and it turned out to be a safe, effective alternative.

So, when I was facing prostate cancer, I did some research. Having the prostate removed was out of the question, and I wasn't too comfortable with having radioactive seeds implanted, either. When I learned about CyberKnife and how it targets only the cancerous cells with high-dose radiation while protecting surrounding healthy tissue, it was an option I wanted to pursue.

HOW I DID IT:

Because I wanted a non-invasive treatment, and CyberKnife Centers of Tampa Bay had come highly recommended, I called for an appointment. I met with Dr. Debra Freeman to discuss my case and an MRI confirmed that I was a good candidate for the procedure.

I had four 14-carat gold markers inserted into my prostate which help to direct the CyberKnife radiation beams to the target. Dr. Freeman joked with me that I had the most expensive prostate in the United States. Once the markers were in place, I started my radiation therapy.

I underwent five 45-minute sessions—less than four hours total—to combat my prostate cancer. Eight weeks after the start of my therapy, my PSA level had dropped to 4.3, a nearly normal level. Sixteen weeks after treatment, it was down to 0.5, and that level has been maintained ever since.

HURDLES:

I can't say I had any real hurdles. Dr. Freeman informed me of the side effects that could occur, and I experienced most of them. But, other than having headaches for about a week and a little trouble urinating, that was the worst of it.

BEST ADVICE:

I'd recommend anyone facing a cancer diagnosis at least find out if they're a candidate for CyberKnife. Go for it. The treatment record is impeccable and it's truly a procedure that works.

Dr. Debra E. Freeman