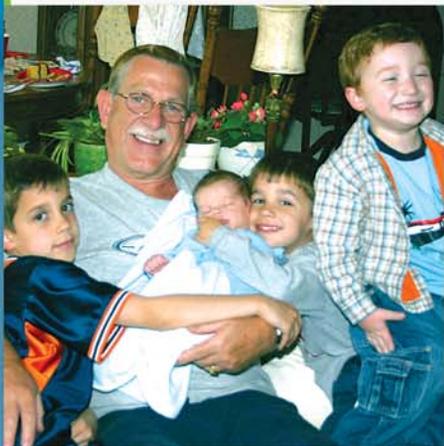


A PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

CUTTING EDGE MEDICAL CARE SAVING LIVES

Phil Thompson enjoys time today with his grandkids thanks to proton treatment received at MPRI.



Confronted with the news he had cancer, Bloomington resident Phil Thompson decided not to go the traditional route for treatment. He knew of a better option.

Thanks to his 30-year career at the Indiana University Cyclotron Facility (IUCF), a world-class physics research center, he was aware of the benefits of proton therapy in treating various types of cancer. The IUCF, as of 2004 – the year in which Thompson was diagnosed with prostate cancer – began providing proton beams to a new medical treatment facility, the Midwest Proton Radiotherapy Institute (MPRI). Indiana is one of only five states in the country offering this innovative procedure.

“Most people locally, including my physician, were unaware of this therapy,” Thompson recalls. “I truly believe it is state of the art. It’s like a virtual scalpel, with accuracy within one millimeter of the tumor.”

Such precision with the bad tissue means that any damage to healthy tissue is more limited than through typical radiation. This can make proton beam therapy an ideal course of action.

“Different types of (localized) cancers can be treated by this method – including ones that are close to an organ, like in your brain, and any cancers that children have because the use of (conventional) radiation on them can stunt the growth of various other healthy tissues,” Thompson explains. “That’s why the proton treatment is so positive.”

A typical round of proton therapy lasts about two and a half months. For Thompson, who retired from IUCF in 2000, there were 44 successful visits – the last one in March 2005. “I had no side effects from it, so I have nothing but praise for the type of treatment I had. Today, I consider myself a cancer survivor.”

MPRI can currently treat 16 patients per day, but that will increase to as many as 80 by early next year. As the new center grows in capacity, Thompson wants to make sure that the general public knows about the medical advancement that worked so well for him. “The majority of people are still very unaware of proton therapy and what its advantages are. That’s sad.

“There are people being diagnosed with untreatable tumors who go away and simply make the best of their life and wait for the inevitable. In many cases where it is inoperable or where they cannot treat with standard radiation, there is a very good possibility that proton therapy is an option,” he offers.

In an effort to help proton therapy enter the mainstream, Thompson has become a walking, talking billboard, speaking to civic organizations and even appearing in the IU School of Medicine’s television commercial and other outreach efforts about its life sciences initiative.

“I love to tell my story to people. So far, my talks have mainly been in front of groups affiliated with my church and a couple of rotary clubs, but I would like to do more. I feel it’s extremely important for me to share my experience – and I’m more than happy to do it,” he notes.

Already at one of these gatherings, Thompson’s message hit home. “There happened to be a lady in attendance with cancer who felt like she was out of options. She ended up doing proton therapy,” he states.

“In fact, people from all over the country are being treated at MPRI, which is why Bloomington, Indiana University and the state should be so proud.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Phil Thompson at rpthomp@sbcglobal.net

Midwest Proton Radiotherapy Institute at www.mpri.org