

Scott's Story – Prostate Cancer

What he thought was an ordinary drive home from watching a spring training baseball game in Ft. Myers, Fla., turned out to be a defining moment in Scott's life.

On March 24, 2006, Scott, his wife Cathy and a couple of friends enjoyed an afternoon watching the New York Yankees take on the Minnesota Twins. While returning home to Naples, Scott's cell phone rang. It was a call from his urologist, Dr. David Spellberg.

Just a couple months before, Scott had been referred to Dr. Spellberg because, during a routine physical, his family physician discovered that Scott's Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) level had risen by more than a point and a half, to 3.68, in just a year. That fateful day, Dr. Spellberg called with Scott's biopsy results. He had prostate cancer.



"I was devastated," said Scott, who had just turned 61. "I thought I was too healthy and too young. I thought I was invincible and that there was no way my biopsy would show cancer."

Scott, an orthopedic surgeon, had been retired for about six years and was enjoying fly fishing, golfing and traveling with his wife of 38 years. He had four young grandchildren who he expected to spend time with as they grew up. "As a doctor, I imagined the worst possible outcome," he said. "I was afraid it was one of the few types of prostate cancer that might spread quickly."

After taking a few days to deal emotionally with his diagnosis, Scott began extensive research on prostate cancer and the various treatments. He spoke with a number of prostate cancer patients about their treatments and the problems they encountered. He conferred with several internists and his youngest son, a cardiology resident in Boston, spoke with his colleagues about their thoughts on the options available to his father.

Around the same time, one of Scott's friends attended a prostate cancer seminar at Naples Community Hospital and brought him back information about the CyberKnife® Robotic Radiosurgery System.

"When I read the brochure, I was excited to talk more to Dr. Spellberg about whether I was a candidate for the CyberKnife," Scott recalled. At his next appointment they discussed the entire list of potential treatments, including watchful waiting – or as Scott calls it, "benign neglect" – cryotherapy, hormone therapy, surgery and several methods of radiation therapy, including the CyberKnife System.

"I was looking for a treatment that offered me the best chance for a complete cure," Scott said. "But it was extremely important to me to avoid the complications – impotence, incontinence and bowel problems – that commonly result from prostate cancer treatment."

Scott and his doctor decided that the CyberKnife treatment was best option to meet all of those criteria. "What convinced me to do it was the preciseness, how the CyberKnife stops and recalibrates in order to accurately treat the tumor," he said. "Once I made the decision to go with the CyberKnife, I felt a calm and relief that I wouldn't have to go through all the complications."

On April 27, 2006 Scott had a CT scan and MRI so that Dr. Jay Friedland, a radiation oncologist, could locate the 40 gram tumor and develop a treatment plan. Treatment with the CyberKnife System began on May 8 at Naples Community Hospital and lasted for five consecutive days.

“Each session lasted about an hour, and throughout the treatment I was able to relax and listen to my own music in a pleasant room,” Scott said. “And after the treatment with the CyberKnife was finished, I rested for no more than a day and then resumed my normal activities.”

Scott said that though he was told to expect fatigue and some short-term urinary symptoms, he experienced none of these. The treatment didn't slow Scott down. Just two days after the treatment ended, he was back out on the golf course, playing 18 holes with his friends. And a few months later he was fly fishing for salmon on Eagle Creek in Labrador on the Atlantic coast of Canada.

The results of CyberKnife treatment exceeded Scott's expectations. At his last appointment with Dr. Spellberg on November 13, 2006, Scott's Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) level was down to 0.7. “Not only did it cure my disease, there were no complications and minimal side effects,” he said. “I feel very fortunate that I could avoid all the complications that are devastating to men.”

“If the patient is the right candidate,” Scott added, “the decision to go with the CyberKnife is a no-brainer.”