Our mission is to provide support and education to patients, families, caregivers and friends of individuals with brain and spine tumors.

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Living with oligodendroglioma
This story originally appeared on MD Anderson’s Cancerwise blog.

By: Meagan Raeke

When Cristy Hardy started dating her now-husband, Kyle, he had a “crazy scar” from brain tumor surgery a year earlier. The benign tumor had been removed and he didn't think much of it, so she didn't either. As time went on, his follow-up appointments were few and far between. He continued working as an electrician, and they got married and had two kids – a perfectly ordinary life.

Then, in 2011, seven years after his initial surgery, Kyle had a grand mal seizure while watching TV with Cristy.

“It was like a ton of bricks,” Cristy says. “Suddenly, I realized that this benign tumor that was supposed to be OK was not OK.”

Flashback to the beginning
Kyle first learned about his brain tumor in 2003, when he woke up in an unfamiliar hospital. He had just moved to Colorado to work in the oilfields with his brother.

“I pulled out my IV line and walked into the hallway asking, ‘What’s going on?’” Kyle says. He soon found out that he’d had a seizure in his sleep, caused by an oligodendroglioma in the left frontal region of his brain. He returned to Texas for treatment and underwent brain surgery at MD Anderson with neurosurgeon Amy Heimberger, M.D. The brain tumor was a low-grade glioma and considered benign.

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Clinical Trials

Search all clinical trials.

We have many clinical trials available. A few open trials are listed below. Click on the link above to search for details and enrollment information.

Study No. 2015-0864
Phase II study of single-agent crenolanib in recurrent/refractory glioblastoma with PDGFRA gene amplification

Study No. 2014-0488
A Phase 1b, Randomized, Multi-Center, Open-Label Study of a Conditionally Replicative Adenovirus (DNX-2401) and Interferon Gamma for Recurrent Glioblastoma or Gliosarcoma

Study No. 2014-0820
Pharmacodynamic Study of Pembrolizumab in Patients with Recurrent Glioblastoma

Study No. 2015-0635
Measuring Symptom Distress in Neuro-Oncology

May is Brain Tumor Awareness Month. Brain tumors are rare. Primary brain tumors (those that begin in the brain) represent less than 2 percent of estimated new cancer cases in 2016. However, we have an entire multidisciplinary team dedicated to studying and treating these rare tumors. Learn more at www.mdanderson.org/brainandspine.

We invite you to #GoGrayinMay with us by:
- Wearing gray in May.
- Telling others about your connection to brain tumors.
- Using #GoGrayinMay and #BTAM on social media.
- Sharing our #GoGrayinMay posts on Facebook or Twitter.
- Supporting brain tumor research. (Two fun options: participate in CureFest on May 21 or sign up for Head for the Cure Houston)
- Giving a brain tumor patient, survivor or caregiver a hug.

Brain Tumor Awareness Month Caregiver Support Group

Join your Brain and Spine Center social work team to talk about self-awareness, self-care, mindfulness, finding meaning and purpose in caregiving, living with courage and compassion, and the importance of connection. This special support group is open to caregivers of brain and spine tumor patients.

Tuesday, May 24
10 a.m.
Main Building, Floor 7, Elevator B, Brain and Spine Center Conference Room (R7.1617)
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A new understanding
Once the tumor returned, Kyle and Cristy realized that a “benign tumor” is not necessarily a harmless tumor. In fact, Kyle would have to begin chemotherapy.

“It was back and he had to start fighting it,” Cristy says. “That’s when awareness started to become important to me.” The tattoo on her forearm is part of her own effort to raise awareness. It depicts a gray ribbon for brain tumor awareness, surrounded by larkspurs, the flower of Kyle’s birth month. In the center of the ribbon is a brain, drawn from Kyle’s CT scans, showing the location of his tumor.

“It became more stressful, but we’re really happy people,” Cristy says. “Going through this has helped us gain a perspective on life and realize how important it is to be happy every day.”

In the years that followed, Kyle continued to work as he dealt with the treatments and side effects, like seizures and short-term memory loss.

Working during chemotherapy treatment “was horrible, but it was important to me to not stop,” Kyle says. “It helped me to keep my brain going.” By early 2016, the tumor had progressed again and Kyle underwent a second craniotomy, which has helped alleviate some of his symptoms for the time being.

Happiness in the face of uncertainty
Although the future contains many unknowns, Kyle and Cristy are sure of one thing: The day is not promised to you, so live in the moment.

“Happiness matters a lot now,” Cristy says. “It’s a conscious choice we make every single day not to let things get the better of us. It’s a tug of war of emotions. The reality is always there, but you can’t let it get you down.”

Despite the ongoing challenges, Kyle is known among his friends and care team as someone who always has a smile and a positive attitude.

“The brain tumor is always at the back of my mind, but there’s no point in being mad at the world,” Kyle says. “Be happy. Live your life.”
Thank you!

We are grateful to all who continue to support our work. The Neurosurgery department received special visits from Martin and Leah Richardson, and the David Senez Jr. Foundation this spring. In April, many doctors, nurses and therapists who work with brain tumor patients provided first aid support at Run for the Rose, sponsored by the Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation, which has donated millions to brain tumor research at MD Anderson.

When MD Anderson transitioned to a new electronic health record in March, you may have noticed some changes to myMDAnderson. Here are a few quick tips to find the information you need:

- **To find where an appointment is located:** Go to My Appointments > Upcoming Appointments. Location details can be found under the Department column on this page. You also can click on the appointment in the list that you would like to learn about. Scroll down to view the location information.

- **To find driving or walking directions:** Go to My Directions in the menu on the left. Type in your medical record number (MRN) to find your appointments and get step-by-step directions.

- **To view notes from past appointments:** Go to My Visit History > Visit Summary. Then click on the visit you want to read notes about. (This feature was unavailable from March 4 to April 18. If you do not see your visit notes from this time period, please request to see your files from our Release of Medical Information team.)

Congratulations, Dr. Yung!

W.K. Alfred Yung, M.D., professor of Neuro-Oncology, was recently named to the National Cancer Moonshot Blue Ribbon advisory panel.

Yung, along with Jim Allison, Ph.D., from Immunology and 26 other cancer experts will advise the National Cancer Institute in its work with Vice President Joe Biden’s National Cancer Moonshot. Learn more.