

Brain and Spine Tumor News

Making Cancer History®

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
Cancer Center

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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Events

myCancerConnection Survivorship Conference
Hear from MD Anderson experts, including *Raymond Sawaya, M.D., professor of Neurosurgery*
Sept. 13-14
Hyatt Regency Galleria
[Details](#)

Head for the Cure Houston 5K
Benefiting brain cancer research at MD Anderson
Saturday, Oct. 13
Pearland Town Center
headforthecure.org/houston

Boot Walk 2018
1.2 mile fundraising walk supporting MD Anderson
Saturday, Nov. 10
MD Anderson
mdanderson.org/bootwalk



August 2018

Clinical trials ... 2

MD Anderson BEST brain tumor support group in The Woodlands ... 2

Glioblastoma survivor: Family and faith give me hope

BY TINO GONZALEZ

This story originally appeared on MD Anderson's [Cancerwise blog](#).

I'm a 58-year-old guy who never thought I would be talking about "the C word." Nevertheless, here I am recollecting the past year contending with glioblastoma, an aggressive brain tumor, in the right temporal lobe of my brain. I'm a proud BOI, which means I was "born on island" in Galveston, Texas, a distinction I carry as a badge of honor. I'm one of seven siblings, I'm married to the love of my life, Denise, and we have three extraordinary sons, a wonderful daughter-in-law and a superhero 3-year-old grandson. They've all played a role in my cancer journey.

Brain tumor symptoms only my wife noticed

I now realize how helpful it is to have partner who knows all your quirks. When Denise mentioned I was missing a "pep in my step" and taking long naps, I didn't think much of it and blamed it on getting older. She also noticed I had a long blank stare one day, which we later learned was a complex seizure.

A few weeks later, we were out shopping, and Denise said straight out, "Let's go to the emergency room and get you checked out." We went to The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) Emergency Room, which we knew well since we'd spent most of our adult lives working there. After being triaged, I was wheeled to a room, then a battery of tests began. After the first test, the doctor said, "Tino, you have a tumor about the size of a lemon and it looks like cancer." Then, after another test, he said, "It's much bigger, about the size of an avocado." Even after receiving this news, those are still two of my favorite foods!

Continued on page 2

Clinical Trials

We have more than a dozen clinical trials available, including newly diagnosed and recurrent glioblastoma, meningioma, ependymoma and brain metastases. A few open trials are listed below.

See more trials, details and enrollment information:

[mdanderson.org/
neuroclinicaltrials](http://mdanderson.org/neuroclinicaltrials)

Study No. 2012-0358

Phase I
WP1066

Recurrent, malignant glioma or melanoma brain metastasis

Study No. 2017-0570

Phase I
Ad-RTS-hIL-12 and
Veledimex

Recurrent or progressive glioblastoma

Study No. 2016-0433

Phase II
Adenovirus (DNX-2401)
with Pembrolizumab
Recurrent glioblastoma or gliosarcoma

Study No. 2017-0290

An online dyadic mind-body intervention for glioma patients and their partners
Newly diagnosed gliomas

Study No. 2016-0330

Phase III
Lomustine and Eflornithine
First recurrence of grade III anaplastic astrocytoma

Glioblastoma Survivor

Continued from page 1

Worth the drive to MD Anderson

My doctor at UTMB was extremely supportive. He told Denise and me to read about glioblastoma, research our options, seek out all avenues and understand what I am up against. Wherever I decided to go for treatment, it was going to be my choice.

I chose MD Anderson for many reasons. After working in health care for many years, I knew MD Anderson always set the standards for cancer research, treatment and follow up. I know that people from around the state, country and the world traveled to MD Anderson for their care, so why not travel 40 miles from Galveston? It gave me a chance to get off the island for a while. The process was so smooth, easy and comforting from the first phone call on.

My glioblastoma treatment

I've experienced very few side effects during my six weeks of radiation and chemotherapy so far. I'm almost done with my one year of oral chemotherapy (temozolomide) under the care of Shiao-Pei Weathers, M.D. I was told ahead of time what to expect, and I think that made

a difference. Eating right, staying hydrated and talking with others that have or were going through the same thing has helped so much.

Keeping a positive attitude

I've always been outgoing and looked at the lighter side of life. During my senior year of high school, I was crowned Class Clown and Powder Puff King. I've always felt that things could be worse in any adverse situation, but of all the types of cancer – my, oh my – never would I have thought I'd get brain cancer. Your brain runs everything in your body, so it's a serious disease, but I choose to be positive.

Thankfully, my family and faith have helped me. My wife has cheered me up, pampered me and waited on me any hour of the day or night. Early on, my sons gave me the same pep talk I gave them during baseball and basketball games: "Keep playing and don't give up." My little grandson and daughter-in-law were also in full support mode.

Someone recently asked me, "What's the best thing that's happened to you in the last year?" They were shocked when I told them "getting brain cancer," but it's true. It's opened my eyes to just how beautiful life is.

MD Anderson BEST

A brain tumor support group

Second Tuesday of each month • 12 to 1:30 p.m. • Brain and Spine Center

Join online from your computer, tablet or smartphone!

MD Anderson BEST (**B**rain tumor **E**ducation and **S**upport **T**ogether) is a monthly education and support group for patients with brain tumors. Each month features a different expert guest speaker, followed by a discussion/support group led by the Brain and Spine Center social work counselors. Lunch and valet parking validation are provided. Upcoming meetings and topics:

Aug. 14: Nutrition • **Sept. 11:** Side effects • **Oct. 9:** Mood and anxiety

Questions, registration and/or request online access: Amy Bragman, 713-563-7728

MD Anderson BEST in The Woodlands

Spotlight on brain metastasis, featuring John de Groot, M.D., and Debra Yeboa, M.D.

Thursday, Aug. 23 • 6:30 to 8 p.m.

South County Community Center, Room 102
2235 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands, TX 77380
Contact: Michelle Will, 936-446-5119