

PATIENT SUCCESS STORY



Life-Saving Device Fights Brain Cancer

By Diana Lomont, Editorial Contributor



Jason Mulcahy was on a family vacation in Massachusetts, taking one last picture on the beach, when his jaw began to quiver uncontrollably. It was the summer of 2016.

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"I didn't think it was a stroke, but knew something was wrong," recalls the agrichemical salesman from Port Orange, Florida. "My family took me to the local hospital, and a CT scan showed something, but they weren't sure what it was."

After going to a larger hospital in Boston for further diagnosis, Mulcahy learned he had a mass in his brain. "They still weren't sure what it was, but recommended I have it removed."

Four days later, he underwent surgery. Another eight days passed before the doctor told him the cause of his illness — the same type of brain cancer U.S. Senator John McCain has. "He told me I have glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) — stage 4 brain cancer," says Mulcahy, who's now 44. "And that I had about 14 months to live."

Shocked by the news, Mulcahy and wife Michelle began researching the best place to go for treatment when they returned home to Port Orange. After looking into cancer centers across Florida and interviewing several doctors, they put Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center on their short list.

"We knew that Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center was a Cancer Center of Excellence, and a colleague of mine had just recovered from colon cancer," recalls Mulcahy. "He said he went to Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center for treatment, and they were fantastic. So I decided — perfect, that's where I'm going to go."

During his first appointment at the cancer center, Mulcahy met with radiation oncologist Dr. Naren Ramakrishna and neuro-oncologist Dr. Nick Avgeropoulos. Like every cancer center patient, he received a personalized packet outlining his treatments and what to expect every step of the way.

"The doctors were fantastic," says Mulcahy. "They were very positive and uplifting and told me, 'You're going to get through this, no problem. We're going to help you.'"

After a series of radiation and chemotherapy treatments, Dr. Avgeropoulos introduced a new technology to help keep the cancer from regrowing in Mulcahy's brain. The device, called Optune, sends electromagnetic pulses through a cap that Mulcahy wears on his head. It's connected to a powerpack he carries on his back. The electric fields created by the device disrupt the growth and reproduction of cancer cells, causing many of them to die.

"I wear the device 18 hours a day and can bank six hours per day if I want to go a few days without wearing it, which I've done while on vacation," explains Mulcahy.

His ongoing treatment includes an MRI exam every two months to make sure the cancer is under control. Now, nearly two years since his surgery, Mulcahy has resumed his busy life working full-time, enjoying vacations with his family and being a dad to his two daughters. "With the device I wear, it's just a new normal," he explains. "I wear my baseball cap to cover it



up. Most people don't even see it, but if anyone asks me about it, I get excited and want to tell them all about it."

He's even worn it while competing in two 5Ks. "I'm not a regular runner, but while wearing the device I finished a recent 5K in 42 minutes," Mulcahy says. "That's better than my best pre-cancer time of 43 minutes."

Today, the Optune device is standard recommended treatment for newly diagnosed GBM in combination with the chemotherapy drug temozolomide.

"We have been prescribing this therapy for years at Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center," says Dr. Avgeropoulos. "And we continue to combine novel therapeutic approaches and clinical research options for our patients for their optimal care."

For more information about innovative and effective cancer treatment options, visit OrlandoHealthCancer.com.

To read more patient stories, visit ChooseOrlandoHealth.com/Stories.

Inspiring Others

Mulcahy enjoys sharing his health journey, along with his travels, on his GBM Traveler blog. "My hope is to inspire others facing their own challenges to be positive and to live life to the fullest," he says. Find his blog at gbmtraveler.com.