Patient Benefits from Multidisciplinary Approach to Treating Cancers

Karen had no history of thyroid cancer in her family so when she felt a palpable nodule in the right side of her neck she didn't consider that it could be cancerous. She did, however, know enough to schedule an appointment with her primary care physician to evaluate the lump. She had an ultrasound and was referred to Prerak Shah, MD, Otolaryngologists from New England Ear, Nose and Throat Center, who practice at Holy Family Hospital. She had her right thyroid lobe surgically removed at Holy Family Hospital using specialized nerve monitoring devices to minimize the risk of injury to the nerve that goes to the vocal cords and produces voice. Her surgery revealed that the nodule and two smaller ones on the right side were cancerous.

“I think it is important to reassure patients that the likelihood that any given thyroid nodule is malignant is rather small,” explained Dr. Shah. “However, if a thyroid cancer is identified, this is invariably a very curable condition with a great prognosis. The multidisciplinary approach and state-of-the-art technology we have for our thyroid patients rivals that of any tertiary care center in Boston.”

Similar to many other patients, Karen did not consider herself at risk for thyroid cancer. She quickly shifted her focus when she learned of her diagnosis. “I have three grandchildren, a daughter, my husband and I take care of my father,” she explained. Karen stayed focused and chose to stay local for her care. “Until I was diagnosed, I didn’t realize how prevalent the disease is, especially in women. I was taken aback by how many people I know who have been diagnosed with thyroid cancer. In my family, we like to keep healthy.”

Prerak Shah, MD, Otolaryngologist, addresses the team of cancer care specialists at a weekly multidisciplinary conference where experts determine the most appropriate custom treatment strategy for a patient.

“You have to put your faith in somebody,” said Karen. “Too often people run to Boston for their care instead of staying in their community. I just don’t think you have to do that. There are enough clinical experts in our community. It’s just that you have to recognize the need to change your thinking. There are enough people here to treat this.”

“I am just happy to know that the community was there for me.”

Holy Family Hospital, in collaboration with the Saint Vincent Hospital and Holy Family Hospital Collaborate for Radiation Oncology.

For six consecutive years, Holy Family Hospital’s Cancer Center has held the Outstanding Achievement Award from the American College of Surgeons (ACS), one of only nine hospitals in Massachusetts and one of only five in New England to be recognized in this manner. The American Cancer Society (ACS) Commission on Cancer (COC) has also given Holy Family Hospital’s Cancer Center a gold seal of recognition for meeting the COC’s standards for quality and performance in the care of cancer patients. These achievements reflect the high level of expertise and patient care provided by the hospital’s multidisciplinary team of experts, including physicians, nurses, social workers, radiologists, dietitians, and other oncology professionals.

Karen Reddy has had no history of thyroid cancer in her family.
For more information on Holy Family Hospital’s Cancer Center, visit steward.org/cancercare.