



Offering Cancer Treatment Close to Home

When patients are diagnosed with cancer, they often want immediate answers from their physician and a plan set in motion to quickly treat the cancer so they can move on with their lives.

Eliza Smith of Florence was no different in her reaction to the news. Fortunately for Eliza and other patients diagnosed with cervical cancer, the McLeod Foundation has provided the McLeod Radiation Oncology Department with an additional tool to effectively and efficiently treat patients so there are no delays in their treatment plans.

A licensed practical nurse with an area nursing home, Eliza had been returning to her gynecologist, Dr. Gary Emerson of McLeod OB/Gyn, every six months for two years following the detection of an abnormal pap smear, a test that examines cells collected from the cervix. The purpose of the test is to detect cancer or abnormal cells that may lead to cancer. Cervical cancer occurs when abnormal cervical cells invade deeper into the cervix or other tissues or organs.

In January of 2010, the results of Eliza's most recent pap test indicated the development of a lesion, an area of abnormal tissue. Dr. Emerson immediately biopsied the area and called Eliza with the pathology results which indicated Stage II Cervical Cancer.

"I felt like I had been hit with a ton of bricks," said Eliza. To begin the battle of treating the cancer, Dr. Emerson referred Eliza to a gynecologic oncologist in Columbia, South Carolina. This

physician recommended a treatment plan for Eliza that included radiation and chemotherapy treatments. Eliza immediately asked the physician if it could be arranged for her to receive the treatments at McLeod in Florence so she would not have to travel back and forth to Columbia. The specialist completely understood and made the necessary arrangements for Eliza to receive her cancer treatment at McLeod from Radiation Oncologist Dr. Rhett Spencer and Medical Oncologist Dr. Jamie Smith.



▲ *Eliza Smith is grateful that she could receive her cancer treatment at McLeod.*

Eliza's treatment plan involved 25 external radiation treatments, one per day for five weeks followed by a boost of five High Dose Rate (HDR) Brachytherapy treatments, also known as internal radiation therapy, twice a week. She also received one chemotherapy treatment a week for four weeks.

Thanks to funding from the McLeod Foundation, the McLeod Radiation Oncology Department had recently

purchased a second HDR Brachytherapy Applicator prior to Eliza's diagnosis. This applicator allows for a precise, three dimensional dose of radiation directly to the cervix while minimizing risk to surrounding organs when treating both early and advanced cervical cancer. The department was in need of the additional applicator because over the previous two years they had experienced an increase in the number of patients being treated at McLeod with a diagnosis of cervical cancer. With the addition of the second applicator, the department can now treat two or more patients in one day.

"Having to wait to receive treatment can create more panic and fear in you," said Eliza. "If my treatments had been delayed, it would have increased my anxiety. It also meant so much to me that I didn't have to travel out of town, and I could receive my treatments close to home. In addition, if I had not been able to receive treatment here it could have kept me from returning to work."

Today, Eliza is grateful to the McLeod Foundation and her team of physicians that she has been cured of her cancer and there were no delays in her treatment plan. She is happy that her cancer is behind her and she has more time to spend with her three children and two grandchildren.

"They got me back to my family, work and most importantly, ME," added Eliza.

Providing patients with the highest level of treatment with convenient care close to home demonstrates the power of giving.