

"My family and friends found it hard to believe that I had undergone major surgery, and I often questioned it myself!"



Karen Amato Schwartz – Glioblastoma

The Challenge

Thursday, September 11, 2008, was not just a historically sad day; it was also the last day of life as I knew it. That day had been perfectly normal, filled with freelance writing jobs, ballet class, and my teenager's busy schedule. Upon going to sleep, it was unimaginable that my next realization would not occur until Sunday night, when I would be awakened by a UPMC Presbyterian nurse. Even more shocking would be the discovery that a neurosurgeon had removed a malignant brain tumor during my missing hours.

The Path to UPMC

By Monday, the pieces finally fit together. I had awakened on Friday with such an excruciating headache, I had no recollection of being taken to our local hospital. While in the emergency room, I lost consciousness. A CT scan showed an unidentified brain mass, resulting in an ambulance race across town to Oakland.

Sadly, the surgeon's first job was to prepare my husband for the worst. With a patient who was almost comatose and no feedback or historical data upon which to draw, there were multiple concerns.

The Solution

The neurosurgeon chose to utilize the [Neuroendoport® approach](#) to remove the tumor, a tennis-ball sized [glioblastoma](#), which is a type of brain cancer.

This minimally invasive brain surgery eliminates full-size incisions, decreasing blood loss and recuperation time. Using an image guidance system, the neurosurgeon created a small entryway for the Neuroendoport, and then employed a two-suction technique to remove the tumor. Because this method reduces the amount of blood loss, I required coagulation for only two vessels, and simple sutures and staples. As a result, I was able to be discharged only two days after surgery!

The Results

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Neuroendoport® Surgery
This animation illustrates the removal of a metastasis using the Neuroendoport technique.



Neuroendoport® for Brain Tumors
Dr. Johnathan Engh discusses the benefit of Neuroendoport® surgery to remove brain tumors.

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Comprehensive testing determined that I was "neurologically intact" with stable vital signs. That meant I could resume a normal lifestyle almost immediately, including exercise, housework, and regular diet, with no physical limitations. My family and friends found it hard to believe that I had undergone major surgery, and I often questioned it myself! I experienced no pain in the operative site, even after the stitches were removed 10 days later. My radiation therapy could begin almost immediately.

Most patients would agree that getting back into a regular lifestyle makes a huge difference in outlook and energy during treatment. My surgeon's use of the Neuroendoport allowed me to return to a normal life more quickly than traditional surgery ever could. My incision would have been much more complicated with the standard protocol, and the recuperation time would have definitely delayed the next step of treatment.

Our patient stories profile a number of patients who have had minimally invasive brain surgery at UPMC. Although everyone's care experience is unique, we hope that sharing these stories will help other prospective patients and their families better understand these procedures and their potential benefits.

Karen's treatment and results may not be representative of all similar cases.

For help in finding a doctor or health service that suits your needs, call the UPMC Referral Service at 412-647-UPMC (8762) or 1-800-533-UPMC (8762). Select option 1.

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