



Lori Kacsur – Breast Cancer & Brain Lesions Patient Story



When Lori Kacsur found a lump in her breast in May 2010, she underwent a lumpectomy followed by chemotherapy and 35 sessions of radiation. After that, her scans were clear, and she thought she was out of the woods.

But about a year later, she was rushed to the hospital with appendicitis. And although the surgery was successful, a chest x-ray showed spots on her lungs and chest wall – metastasis of the breast cancer.

Lori underwent chemotherapy as part of a clinical trial to treat the cancer in her lungs. A year later, an MRI revealed that Lori had developed several lesions on her brain. Shannon Puhalla, MD, Lori's medical oncologist, sent her back to Carol Scicutella, DO, her original radiation oncologist at Heritage Valley Radiation Oncology, who successfully treated the lesions using whole-brain radiation. When a later scan showed that one lesion was particularly aggressive, Lori was referred to radiation oncologist Steven Burton, MD, and surgical oncologist Johnathan Engh, MD, for stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS).

Lori was one of the first patients to receive SRS using the new CyberKnife M6 at Mary Hillman Jennings Radiation Oncology Center at UPMC Shadyside. "The first time you have the CyberKnife treatment, there's a lot of anticipation," she says. "But the procedure itself was nothing to be worried about."

Lori had several CyberKnife treatments of between a half-hour to an hour each in October and November 2013. During the entire treatment process, Lori's worst fear was that her memory would suffer as a result of the radiation. Thankfully, she never encountered that side effect.

After her first round of SRS, some of her lesions have completely disappeared, while several minor lesions and a single major lesion remained. Lori then received chemotherapy with carboplatin and avastin, and underwent an additional round of radiation therapy to her back prior to additional treatment with the CyberKnife.

Now 55, Lori has led a normal life since her diagnosis at 51, and her treatment plan has extended her time with her family. As a district administrator for a department store, she has continued to work 40 hours a week despite her condition. Few of her coworkers even know about her cancer, which is how she prefers it. Lori is very confident about the management of her cancer. "I know I am in good hands," she remarks.