

Former coach makes the right call to defeat cancer

As a former coach, Mike Satarino knows teamwork can make the difference between victory and defeat. As a cancer survivor, Mike knows teamwork can mean the difference between life and death.

In the 1970s, Mike walked sidelines and dugouts as coach of the football, basketball, and baseball teams at Bishop Dunne High School in Dallas. He's now in his 14th year as principal of the Talented and Gifted Magnet High School in Dallas, but the move from the locker room to the principal's office hasn't changed the message he preaches: the value of teamwork, especially in times of hardship. When challenges present themselves, no matter how talented or gifted an individual may be, no one individual can meet those challenges unassisted.

Coordinated efforts lead to positive outcomes. Mike is living proof.

In 2004, Mike was diagnosed with colon cancer and began treatment at a Dallas-area hospital. He underwent three rounds of chemotherapy, and after three years of monitoring, his colon was declared "clean." But in a follow-up visit, his physician identified troublesome spots on a CT scan. The colon cancer had moved to the liver, and Mike was told he was not a candidate for surgery. "The doctor said I had 22 months to live," Mike says. "And then he just left the room."

The diagnosis devastated Mike and his wife, Patty. They've been married for 38 years, have four children, one grandchild, and another on the way. His son Michael, a senior strategic planner in the Office of Health System Affairs at UT Southwestern Medical Center, urged his father to get a second opinion and immediately introduced him to Dr. James Willson, a medical oncologist and Director of UT Southwestern's Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Willson, in turn, introduced Mike's case to the rest of his team.

"That's what we do for our patients"

After examining Mike and collaborating with his peers at the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, Dr. Willson believed surgery was not only an option, but a necessary component of Mike's treatment, along with aggressive chemotherapy.

"Patty and I met with Dr. Willson," Mike says. "He looked at the CT scan and told me, 'We can stop this.'"

Dr. Willson says, "That decision was made possible by the kind of consult I am able to have with the Simmons multidisciplinary approach. I met with the colon cancer management team. That's what I do—what we all do—for all our patients."

In fact, multidisciplinary oncology teams at the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center exist for every kind of cancer. The disease-oriented teams include a medical oncologist (Dr. Willson's role in Mike's case), a surgical oncologist, a radiologist, a pathologist, and a nursing oncologist, all working, as a team, on one problem.

As the surgical oncologist of the team on Mike's case, Dr. Roderich Schwarz thought surgery might be possible and his talents might be called upon. "When I met with Mike for the first time, I was thoroughly familiar with his condition because of our team approach," he says. Upon further examination, Dr. Schwarz scheduled a procedure to remove the affected portion of Mike's liver.

Dr. Schwarz met with Mike and Patty before the surgery and made quite an impression. "He has a terrific sense of humor, and better still, he's a *positive* guy," Mike says. "He took out 70 percent of my liver and got all the cancer out. When the results came back after surgery, he told me, 'While I can never guarantee it won't return, I can tell you that according to our instruments, it's not in you now.'"

Such positivity was a theme throughout Mike's experience at UT Southwestern's Simmons Cancer Center. "I've *never* gone to the Center and seen a frown," Mike says. "It's always courtesy and respect,

starting with the valet and on up to the nurses, who always have the answers or know where to find them. Everyone's always positive, and you can't ask for more than that when you've been told you're dying."

In Mike's case, the positive outlook includes the results of his treatment. "I'm thrilled with how well he's done and responded to chemotherapy, surgery, and other treatments," Dr. Willson says. "The fact that Mike has done as well as he has done is a real testament to the multidisciplinary team approach we practice at the Simmons Cancer Center."