

Patient Case Study (18) Alun Evans



Alun isn't expecting a miracle. But with PDT he says that with PDT he has made the best cancer treatment choice

Alun Evans from Cwbran near Newport in South Wales, knows that there is no escaping his bile duct cancer and its consequences. In June 2009 he became jaundiced and within two weeks he knew the worst.

He was given 12 months to live, and the options offered of surgery or chemotherapy didn't seem to make much sense - if they could only offer the palliation of his symptoms.

The 62-year old automotive engineer, who started his working life as a draughtsman, had the surgical option ruled out pretty quickly as he has a heart condition.

Anyway, surgeons rarely operate on anyone over 60, so Alun failed to qualify on two grounds. The success rate wasn't high, so Alun would have rejected surgery anyway.

To relieve the symptoms, Alun had already had a stent fitted and this was doing the trick. He felt reasonably well, and then sat down to consider the chemotherapy option with his wife, Jenny.

"Basically, what you are told with such a death sentence is to go away and enjoy yourself and put your life in order. Well, we thought it through and if I was to end up having three months of chemo and that wasn't going to offer any real benefit, then why would I potentially ruin the three best months of my final 12?"

"So, the decision was made, until I came across the idea of PDT.

"The trials information didn't seem to indicate that I would be in any serious pain, and there was a chance that I could maybe extend my life."

Many patients who have had PDT for this cancer have lived two, three or even more years.

The bile duct cancer study is in its final stage before it is approved for nationwide use – which was another factor that made up Alun's mind. As well as the stent, the PDT procedure seeks to re-condition the cells in the ducts and around them. The procedure attempts to delay or stop the cancer's growth, reducing the dependence on the stents alone.

Alun was accepted as a patient on the trial at University College Hospital in London – one of nearly a dozen regional centres around the UK that has been recruiting patients.

What appealed to Alun and Jenny was this was proposed as a one-off treatment. There were some light-sensitivity issues and after the treatment he couldn't go out in bright sunshine for several weeks.

But he says that other than this mild inconvenience, he has escaped the knife and the weekly hospital trips for the chemotherapy.

“I really feel OK now, and we are starting to go away for a few holidays for a week at a time. I am able to lead a relatively normal life – limited only by my heart condition.

“I know this is a trial, but I know some patients have been offered two or even three PDTs and they are still alive. I would jump at the chance if it would give me more time and maintain the quality of life I have.

“I’m certainly going to live past the 12 months, and who knows what after that. Any time with my wife, family and friends will be a real bonus,” he adds.

Ends

Further information from David Longman, Director, KILLING Cancer

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