



Proton Therapy Precisely Treats Hard-To-Reach Cancers

(NAPSA)—With a cancer diagnosis, it's important to consider the size of the tumor and the location in the body when researching treatment options. Deep-seated tumors and those near or within critical organs like the esophagus, lungs and heart require powerful treatment but also can be more sensitive to radiation exposure. For many cancer patients facing these challenges, proton therapy is an option.

Proton therapy uses a beam of protons to deliver a powerful dose of radiation directly into the tumor. The precision of the beam limits exposure to healthy tissue and reduces the risk of short- and long-term side effects, allowing most patients to continue with their active lifestyle even during treatment.

The ability to limit radiation to healthy tissue and maintain her usual routine as a busy mom was imperative to 39-year-old Molly Allen when she was diagnosed with large B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2008.

When Molly, a mother of four, developed a cough while on vacation with her family, she didn't think too much of it.

"When you're a mom, it's all about putting your kids first. Sometimes, keeping up with your health gets shifted to the bottom of the list," she said.

But when the cough persisted for four weeks, she decided it was time to see her doctor. Molly was confident it was just a minor infection, but her physician ordered a chest X-ray that



Molly Allen turned to proton therapy when she was diagnosed with large B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

revealed a large mass near her lung. Her physician immediately ordered a CT scan and referred her to a pulmonologist.

Molly's scan showed a tumor the size of a golf ball in her chest cavity. She was scheduled for a second scan two weeks later, and by then the mass had doubled in size. It continued to grow to the size of a grapefruit before Molly could begin chemotherapy. After six rounds of chemo the tumor shrank, but Molly was advised to undergo further treatment with radiation.

A friend sent her information on proton therapy, and due to the location of her tumor, highly recommended she look into it.

"Many lymphomas occur in the chest near vital organs, such as the heart, lungs or esophagus, so it can be difficult to get the high doses of radiation needed to the

tumor without causing damage to those sensitive areas," explained James D. Cox, M.D., professor of Radiation Oncology at MD Anderson. "With proton therapy, we create individualized treatment plans to precisely target even the most difficult-to-reach tumors, like lymphomas and cancers of the lung and esophagus, while minimizing the damage to healthy tissues and vital organs."

After her consultation with Dr. Cox, Molly's decision was made. She sought treatment at the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center in Houston where she spent four weeks—a decision she credits with eliminating her cancer and allowing her to continue to be with her family during treatment.

"I got to be home with my kids," she said. "I wasn't separated from them at all through this. I went to my treatment appointment at the Proton Therapy Center and then continued living my life on my terms."

In January 2009, Molly completed her last round of proton therapy and returned home to her normal routine, enjoying time with her husband and children, taking them to Little League and soccer games, and walking the family's two dogs. During a recent follow-up visit to the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center, Molly's scans showed no signs of cancer.

"Part of being well means I'm back to my busy life," she said.

To learn more about the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center, visit www.mdandersonproton.com.