

Conquering cancer



Mattie Truelove has a lot to be grateful for in 2008, thanks to her doctors at St. Vincent. A little more than a year ago, she was facing extensive surgery and fearing for her life. Now, the 66-year-old woman from Speedway, Ind., can see the light at the end of a difficult journey.

A frightening diagnosis

In October 2006, Mattie's mouth hurt so much she couldn't eat and could barely talk. After seeing her dentist and a specialist, state-of-the-art testing confirmed the diagnosis. "It was an extensive cancer that involved the front half of her tongue and her jaw," explains Tod Huntley, M.D., co-director of the Head and Neck Cancer Program at St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital.

Although she didn't realize it at the time, Mattie was in the best possible hands. She had been referred to Dr. Huntley, a partner at the Center for Ear, Nose, Throat and Allergy (CENTA), the nation's busiest private practice head and neck surgical

group, featuring a multidisciplinary team of health professionals who have a wide range of experience in treating head and neck conditions, including cancer.

Mattie says she felt confident that Dr. Huntley would be able to help her. "It was like God sent him to me," she says. "He was so gentle. He answered all my questions. He treated me with respect. He did what he needed to do to make me comfortable. And he told me he was not going to let me die."

Although Dr. Huntley wanted to remove the cancer immediately, Mattie begged him to wait until after Thanksgiving. After enjoying the holiday with her family, Mattie underwent more than eight hours of surgery under two highly skilled surgical



CARE THAT COUNTS:
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—Mattie Truelove

teams. Dr. Huntley and his associate, head and neck surgeon Stephen Freeman, M.D., removed part of Mattie's jaw and tongue, as well as lymph nodes in her neck. Then, using bone, skin and muscle from her lower leg, they reconstructed her lower jaw, tongue and the floor of her mouth.

The hard part begins

After spending nearly 10 days recuperating in the hospital, Mattie returned home to begin the six-week radiation therapy necessary to ensure that any microscopic residual cancer was eradicated. Even more difficult was the rehabilitation therapy that continues three times a week to this day. At first, she couldn't swallow, recalls her daughter Mona, who moved in with Mattie for six months so she could nurse her back to health.

"Her throat worked normally but she couldn't get the food to the back of her throat because her tongue didn't work normally. She had to relearn how to swallow," Dr. Huntley says. "Our speech



therapist, Eric Blom, Ph.D., helped her relearn to articulate words and speak.”

That wasn't easy. “Sometimes I would get so tired of hurting that I felt I couldn't do it anymore,” says Mattie. “Mona was there and kept telling me, ‘Yes, you can.’ Dr. Huntley did the same thing. He took care of me and said, ‘You can do this.’”

Turning the corner

In August 2007, Mattie underwent one more surgery to reshape the gum tissue over her jaw. With another year now under way, Mona can't believe her mother's progress. “She's made such huge strides,” she says. “Now she can swallow small amounts of water, and at her last

swallow test, she was able to swallow pudding. She has an excellent speech therapist who wants to get her to the point where she'll eat solid foods again.”

For Mattie, simply being able to spend the holidays with her family was enough. “I'm very lucky to have my family and the doctors I have. Now, I look forward to life more.”

“Mattie is an inspirational lady,” Dr. Huntley says. “Inside that tiny body is one huge heart. She has never complained about anything. Her cancer was so extensive that the odds were stacked heavily against her. She has not only healed beautifully, but also has stated her willingness to help others who are faced with this frightening problem.” 🦋

Your choice for specialty care

The five CENTA team physicians work together to provide comprehensive care for all adult and pediatric ear, nose and throat disorders, including conditions of the ears, nose, sinuses, throat, voice box and salivary, thyroid and parathyroid glands. The group also specializes in the comprehensive treatment of allergies and is nationally recognized for its work with snoring and obstructive sleep apnea.

CENTA also heads the new Head and Neck Cancer Program at St. Vincent Indianapolis, a centerpiece in the hospital's nationally recognized cancer center. The team includes CENTA's four head and neck surgeons and a Ph.D. speech pathologist, as well as radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, a maxillofacial prosthodontist, a cytologist, a head and neck pathologist, nurse practitioners and social workers.

Need a doctor?

CENTA has three locations in Carmel, Avon and Indianapolis. For office hours and more information, call (317) 926-1056 or visit centadocs.com.

A breakthrough for headache patients

If you've struggled with headaches or endured the agony of migraines, help is here.

St.Vincent is putting an end to the pounding with the opening of Indiana's first center devoted exclusively to the diagnosis and treatment of headaches in adults and children. In January, the St.Vincent Headache Center opened its doors at St.Vincent Carmel Hospital, bringing together a wide range of specialists dedicated to diagnosing and treating headaches.

"We believe there's tremendous pent-up demand for this type of center," says Gary Everling, director of

Business Development at St.Vincent Carmel. He adds that the center will likely draw patients not only from central Indiana, but also throughout the state and even the Midwest.

The specialized staff includes a full-time, on-site neurologist, along with psychologists, head and neck physical therapists and dietitians. The center also draws on the vast, convenient resources of St.Vincent Carmel, which include outpatient imaging, a sleep disorder laboratory and a comprehensive



Ed Zdobylak, M.D.

rehabilitation center.

"For people who have headaches that they feel interrupt their daily activities at least two days a month, we now have treatment options that can truly change their quality of life," says neurologist Ed Zdobylak, M.D., the Headache Center's medical director.

The St.Vincent Headache Center is located at St.Vincent Carmel Hospital, Entrance #4, in the Professional Office Building, 13430 North Meridian St., Suite 165, Carmel. For more information, call (317) 582-8270. ✈

Taking the lead in the fight against cancer

St.Vincent Indianapolis Hospital is taking a lead role in the National Cancer Institute's latest effort to bring state-of-the-art cancer services to more people.

"There are 16 very different sites across the country collaborating in this effort, and St.Vincent is the lead site for three participating hospitals within the Ascension Health System," says Amy Starling, executive director, Oncology.

In 2008, St.Vincent is concentrating on six key pillars:

1 Disparities: "Access to cancer care needs to be improved

among underserved populations, such as minorities, the uninsured and those living in rural areas," Starling says. "These populations tend to be diagnosed later and so they have a reduced chance of survival."

2 Survivorship: People with cancer are surviving longer, but they may develop other cancers or related diseases later in life. "We need a portable record of the initial cancer care that would also contain recommendations for future care," Starling says.

3 Information technology: A centralized clinical record for patient care and clinical research

purposes is a major initiative of this project.

4 Clinical trials: The goal is to bring more cancer studies into the community and increase the number of people, especially underserved populations, who participate.

5 Biospecimens: Using discarded tissue specimens, St.Vincent plans to participate in research projects related to targeted cancer therapies.

6 Quality of care: St.Vincent is adopting evidence-based guidelines similar to those used by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, an alliance of 21 of the country's leading cancer centers. ✈