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Research's Lifeline

Brain tumor research extends son's life

Imagine a life inextricably linked to the success of a research experiment. For some individuals battling brain cancer and other fatal conditions, their life journey runs parallel to evolving research and procedure innovations available for attacking tumors.

This was true for Tommy Detesco. At age 6, he was diagnosed with brain cancer and for the next 26 years he would visit nearly a dozen hospitals nationwide searching for the best brain tumor treatments and procedures available. Tommy passed away at age 32. His life, though cut short by illness, is remembered through the many lessons he passed on to his family and friends.

Extending Life

Thomas N. Detesco, MD, brought his son to Cleveland Clinic in 2002 and since then, believed his son's life was extended because of the technology being researched and perfected during Tommy's remissions. As new brain tumor research emerged, such as gamma knife therapy, a precise, aggressive treatment in which beams of gamma rays are delivered directly to the tumor, Tommy benefited.

"We were impressed and pleased to be able to establish a relationship at a hospital that was developing in the field of brain tumor research. It was rapidly becoming a distinguished place, and it was on par with other facilities across the country doing the same," says Dr. Detesco, who, at his Youngstown-based medical practice, cares for nearly 150 patients also treated at Cleveland Clinic.

Remembering Tommy

In memory of his son, Dr. Detesco established the Tommy Detesco Fund to support the Brain Tumor and Neuro Oncology Center at Cleveland Clinic. The fund will support brain tumor research specifically targeted for young adults ages 15 – 35.

"There is a lot of energy placed on pediatric cancer and illness, and tumors affecting older adults. We want to put energy toward bench, scientific and social research that specifically affect adolescents," Dr. Detesco says.

The goal for the fund also is to forever remember Tommy as a person who would not let brain cancer define his life. Dr. Detesco says his son should be a model for young adults with brain cancer because, like Tommy, they have an opportunity to make a difference with their lives.

"Tommy was a person who never used anyone for any ulterior gain. He would never be manipulative, and there was no artificiality about him," Dr. Detesco says. "He was a boy who could get complete joy out of the present."

Dr. Detesco says he knows his son would be happy that the fund is helping others.

"Tommy would think it would be perfectly logical that we would be doing something to help other people. He was a person who would have enthusiastically applauded this," Dr. Detesco says.

Dr. Detesco, with Tommy's mother, Lucille, and siblings, Jennifer, Maria and John, all are spokespeople for the fund. Inspired by Tommy's ability to have found complete joy in his life, family and friends commemorate his spirit by giving to the fund and recognizing him as a person who changed their lives.

To make a gift supporting brain cancer research or any area of Cleveland Clinic, visit [iSupport](#), our secure online giving site, or call Institutional Relations and Development at 216.444.1245 or toll-free at 800.223.2273, ext. 41245.

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