

Update on Alan Miller... (from Tina Miller Lipstreu, Alan's daughter)

It has been awhile since we have updated. With this disease, it is SLOW progress but progress! In the last couple of months dad has been going to DUKE at least once a week to monitor his progress and observe the cancer. Here is a synopsis of the past few months:

The Cancer: We met with dad's oncologist Dr. Crawford several times in the last two months. Unfortunately, there are several new lesions that the doctors suspect to be more cancer. The lesions are all contained to his chest. Dr. Crawford is working closely with his neurologist to find the best course of treatment. Dad will need more chemotherapy. The current concern is that chemotherapy can potentially cause "chemo brain" or brain fog and confusion. With dad's current symptoms they do not want to add to the confusion. We need to treat the cancer as it is the cause of the Autoimmune Encephalitis; however Dr. Crawford feels the cancer has been growing for the at least the past year which means it is "slow growing." They decided to wait three months until June to rescan and reassess if dad is ready to withstand chemotherapy.

The Encephalitis: Today for Dad's birthday Duke gave him the present of another MRI. :-) The MRI showed improvement in the brain. Some of the swelling has begun to dissipate. There is still swelling in the brain but not as considerable as before. We are noticing some positive changes as well! Dad can remember things that happen throughout the day! This is extremely exciting! He is able to retain basic short term memories such as where he is, what he ate, what is planned for the day. Unfortunately, dad does not remember major life events from the past 66 years of his life. He remembers people but cannot remember certain memories with those people. For instance, dad does not remember mine or my brother's weddings, going to the beach with grandchildren, or his retirement party. At times, he can recall events if prompted. And of course since dad is such a people person he ALWAYS remembers people and how he feels about them. The memories are slowly coming back. The doctor said the memories are in his brain, it will just take a while for them to resurface. Another positive improvement is dad can READ and COMPREHEND! This is extremely exciting for my father who is an avid reader. It has given back some joy in his day. Finally, it seems he can create new memories. He can remember things from the day or week before. It seems to take a while for his brain to "reboot" everyday but eventually he can recall previous events. Sadly, we lost my grandmother and his mother a week ago. Dad did get to spend some quality time with her before she died. We went to Pennsylvania for the funeral which helped Dad immensely. He was able to recall some forgotten memories. Home is always where the heart is and Pennsylvania has always been home!

What's Next? Dad will have a 24 hour EEG to monitor for more seizures on April 26-27. The doctor feels dad may be having tiny "focal seizures." Several times throughout the day, dad has a "cold chill" type sensation. The doctor feels this could be due to smaller seizures. The test will help us understand what's going on. Dad will be rescanned for the cancer sometime in May or June.

We are so grateful for these minor improvements and know that we have a long road to recovery ahead of us. Dad is trying to keep his spirits up and gets enjoyment out of reading and going to outings with mom. The weather is turning warmer which means we can enjoy long days outside going for walks (with my mom and dad's new puppy, Cali) and hopefully playing golf again.

We cannot thank you all enough for the generosity, prayers, words of comfort, visits, cards, well wishes, and love from all over. We feel your love here!

Thank you all!!

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