

Trusting the KP Model through the long journey of Cancer

62-year-old Jay Gauthier recalls a hospitalization at Adventist Health Bakersfield (AHB), in October 2019. It was there that a very thorough and caring KP hospitalist, Hong-Fa Yang, MD discovered a tongue lesion and promptly referred him to ENT specialist, Doug Hoffmann, MD, for further evaluation. After seeing Dr Hoffman and undergoing a biopsy in January 2020, Jay found his life take a complete turn when the results came back positive with squamous cell invasive carcinoma of the tongue.

Within one week, his case was presented at the KP Los Angeles Medical Center (LAMC) Tumor Board. Seven physicians consisting of surgeons, radiologists, and oncologists examined him and provided consultation. he was told he had Stage IV tongue cancer and it had spread into his lymph nodes. Fear of the unknown settled into his mind. To ease that worry, a plan of care was created including neck dissection surgery and partial glossectomy (tongue removal).



Thirty painful radiation treatments followed for six weeks. Without his wife, of 40 years by his side due to COVID 19 visitation restrictions, he then underwent 8-hour chemotherapy treatments for six weeks. There was a moment when he felt it was just too much and pleaded with his radiation oncologist, Dr. Mariscal, to stop the treatments. Dr. Mariscal reminded him, *"Cancer care isn't like a fast-food restaurant. I can't stop the treatments if you want to live. This area must be attacked."*

Three months later, Jay went to the AHB Emergency Department and was diagnosed with COVID and pneumonia. He needed a blood transfusion, further complicating his condition. Jay's fight persevered, even with extreme weakness, diarrhea, and a suction canister, his care never stopped.

One year had passed since he was given his Cancer diagnosis and he was still unable to swallow. Jay had lost 110 lbs.; his only source of protein was *Boost High Protein Nutritional Drinks*. Dr. Michael McNicol, and Dr. Peter Baxter, both from KP LAMC, reviewed Jay's fluoroscopy report and determined that scar tissue had closed his esophagus and the radiation treatments hindered the muscle control in his epiglottis. *The epiglottis folds backward to cover the entrance of the larynx so food and liquid do not enter the windpipe and lungs.*

In November 2021, Jay was finally able to eat and drink again after having his peg tube removed. He slowly built up his intake by trying different foods and liquids. To this day, he still works on increasing his food intake and can only eat half of a hamburger in one sitting.

Day by day, his health has improved and is grateful for the timely care he has received. Jay is currently in recovery with his care team monitoring him and helping him live a full and meaningful life.

Jay could not be more impressed by the coordination of care he received from AHB, KP Kern County to KP LAMC, and AIS Cancer Center. His long journey was made easier because of the exceptional coordination of care he received. He sends a message of thanks to his care team, "What you do matters. You help change people's lives and the calling you have is well worth it. You do not know it, but you will leave a legacy!"