

# SCRIPPS PROTON THERAPY

# CONNECT

A quarterly newsletter for Scripps Proton Therapy Center patients, their families, and others interested in proton therapy treatment.

Spring 2017



*Chris Cox recently completed proton therapy for a rare form of cancer that had recurred after 11 years.*

## Targeted therapy meant less radiation to his heart and lungs

### Chris Cox Chose Proton Therapy to Treat Recurrent Thymoma

As a 17-year member of the U.S. House of Representatives and former Chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Christopher Cox is no stranger to challenges. In late 2005, he was looking out of his office window at the Capitol building when his physician called with a new challenge: he had thymoma.

This very rare form of cancer spreads locally in the chest rather than through the bloodstream; however, if treated early enough, there is a very low chance of recurrence.

Chris' case appeared to be typical, and following surgery, he received a clean bill of health—until 11 years later,

when doctors discovered the cancer had returned with a vengeance. It had spread within his pleural cavity, the space between the two thin membranes that line and surround the lungs, as well as to his diaphragm, left lung and heart.

Although this surgery was far more complicated, Chris' surgeons successfully

removed all visible cancer. The concern then became the invisible, microscopic cancer that might still remain in his chest cavity, which could spark another recurrence. He had already received chemotherapy when his chest was open during surgery. The only remaining treatment available was radiation.

Chris initially explored conventional X-ray radiation, and was impressed with the new techniques, such as arc radiation, that more carefully focus the X-rays on the critical areas needing treatment, resulting in less "scatter" on surrounding areas.

"But because in my case the intended targets of radiation included my heart and my left lung, the health risks posed by unwanted scatter were much higher," Chris explains. "Several experts recommended that I explore proton beam radiation, which would be more sparing of those vital organs."

After consulting with his surgeon and the radiation oncology specialists at Baylor University in Houston, Chris opted for a treatment plan recommended by Scripps Proton Therapy Center radiation oncologist Huan Giap, MD.

"The benefits of Dr. Giap's plan were clear. The radiation to which my heart and lung would be exposed was substantially reduced, even as the radiation dosage to the cancer was increased," Chris says.

Chris, who lives in Orange County, traveled to San Diego to begin proton therapy at Scripps. He received treatments five days a week for seven weeks.

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## Tips to Fight Back Against Allergies

San Diego is known for consistent sunshine and a mild climate, but our wonderful weather also means that allergy season lasts all year long. May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, and here in San Diego, grass, weed and tree pollens cause sneezing, coughing, congestion and irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. If you have asthma or eczema, high pollen counts can make symptoms worse.

**1 Treat mild symptoms with over-the-counter remedies.** Numerous treatments are available to help you defend against seasonal allergies, and many that were previously prescription-only are now sold over the counter. For minor symptoms such as itching and sneezing, oral antihistamines may be a good first option. Try to avoid antihistamines that have a sedating effect unless you want to sleep; instead, choose non-drowsy options.

**2 Relieve nasal congestion with steroid sprays.** If antihistamines don't completely relieve nasal congestion, you may need to add another weapon such as an intranasal steroid spray. Though many are available without a prescription, the active ingredients differ, so talk to your doctor about which specific brand may be best for you. Though nasal steroid sprays can begin to take effect quickly, you generally need to use them for several days to clear out the inflammation in the nasal tissue and get the full benefit.

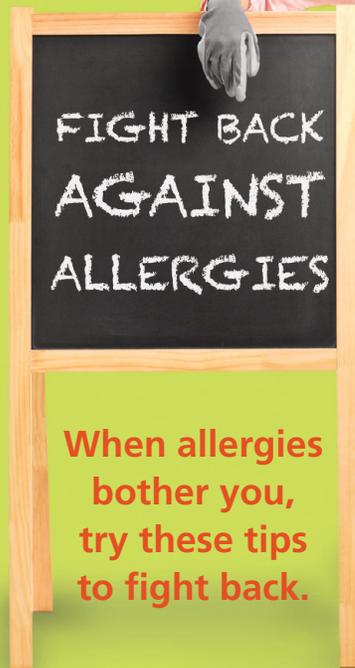
**3 Consult an allergist.** Symptoms still not improving? Consider making an appointment with an allergist. Other illnesses may be mistaken for allergies, so you want to make sure that you in fact have allergies and not

something else. An allergist can test you for sensitivity to pollens as well as other common allergens and let you know the best treatment options. For example, many people test positive to ragweed allergy, but since there is no ragweed in San Diego, that is not something that needs to be treated.

**4 Minimize your exposure.** Where you live can make a difference to your exposure. San Diego's frequent onshore breezes can help minimize allergens along the coast. As those breezes blow through the canyons, however, they pick up pollens and carry them inland. If you exercise outdoors, consider exercising closer to the coast to take advantage of onshore breezes that aren't laden with pollen. If that is not possible, try to exercise early in the morning before the wind picks up.

A saline nasal rinse can be helpful to rinse allergens out of the nose and sinuses. Follow directions carefully, and be sure to use only distilled or sterilized water—tap water is not safe to use as a rinse.

Finally, try to keep allergens out of the house by closing windows on breezy days. An indoor HEPA air filter can help remove pollen, dust and other irritants from the air.



### Chris Cox Chose Proton Therapy *continued from front cover*

Because his surgery had been so extensive, Chris was still feeling significant side effects when his treatments began. Though the proton therapy added to the fatigue he was already feeling and made it difficult to carry on his usual activities, Chris did not feel any worse for wear during his proton treatments.

Now, Chris says he is feeling better day by day. Recently, he resumed his career as a partner at international law firm

Morgan Lewis & Bockius and president of the firm's strategic consulting group.

"I'm enormously grateful to the team at Scripps, led by Dr. Giap, for the world-class care they provided and the modern technology they so expertly deployed for my benefit," he says. "I would most assuredly recommend the Scripps Proton Therapy Center to anyone else who needs radiation treatment as I did."



*Benny Alcafaras and Jaze Peralta help ensure treatment goes smoothly from start to finish.*

## SPTC Employee Spotlight

### Meet Our Patient Service Representatives

As patient service representatives at Scripps Proton Therapy Center, Jaziel “Jaze” Peralta and Benny Alcafaras play important roles in our patients’ care. From reviewing paperwork and scheduling appointments to answering questions and acting as liaison between patients and their care team, Jaze and Benny help make sure each patient’s care goes as smoothly as possible.

In addition, Jaze and Benny also serve as part of our concierge team, providing information to out-of-town and interna-

tional patients and their family members regarding lodging, transportation, dining and other services during their stay

in San Diego. Scripps Proton Therapy Center partners with several hotels and extended stay lodging options as well as transportation services and car rental agencies to offer discounted rates to our patients.

Jaze joined Scripps as a payment processor in 2012. Two years later, she transferred to Scripps Proton Therapy Center as a patient service representative. She says the best part of her job is being able to assist patients during their treatment.

“These patients have inspired me so much. Despite their condition, I see smiles on their faces. I admire them so much for being fighters,” she says. “And I always look forward to the day when they ring the bell.” The bell-ringing symbolizes the completion of treatment.

Benny joined Scripps nine years ago and worked in health information and insurance billing before coming to the proton center as a patient service representative in November of 2016.

The best part of Benny’s job is making patients feel well-cared-for and respected every step of the way. “Patients often refer to their stay as their ‘Radiation Vacation,’” he says. “I want them to keep the smile they had from the time they walk in for their initial treatment to their last treatment.”

## Proton Therapy in the News: Bankruptcy Filing Will Not Affect Care

You may have heard that California Proton Treatment Center (CPTC) filed for bankruptcy on March 1, 2017. Scripps Clinic Medical Group leases the proton center from California Proton Treatment Center (CPTC), LLC, and Scripps provides patient care services. It is important to note that CPTC has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, not the Scripps Proton Therapy Center, and the patients treated here are Scripps patients. Through this bankruptcy filing CPTC will reorganize its debt structure, and it has secured a bridge loan to continue to fund the facility’s operations.

Scripps will continue to provide medical services at the center as agreed in the lease and management agreement, and our patients will continue to have access to this highly advanced radiation therapy as they have had since our facility opened in 2014.

Scripps Health is proud that we were able to bring proton therapy to San Diego to offer this life-saving technology to cancer patients. We greatly appreciate our SPTConnect members’ dedication to the center and willingness to connect with and support our new patients and those considering proton therapy. Many of you have been involved in some of our market development efforts including meeting with legislators, conducting interviews, hosting patient dinners and information sessions, and even being involved in our marketing efforts. We appreciate all that you do to support our ongoing effort to make proton therapy available to patients in the region.

We will continue to keep you informed of any updates regarding this matter. Thank you for your continued support of Scripps Proton Therapy Center!

## JOIN US FOR THE 2ND ANNUAL



# Appreciation Event

external affairs, while you enjoy complimentary appetizers and beverages. Current and previous patients and their families are welcome to attend. We hope to see you there!

Meet and connect with other patients, their families and the Scripps Proton Therapy Center staff. Learn about the latest and greatest technology being used at Scripps from Susan Taylor, former TV news anchor and Scripps' director of

**Scripps Proton Therapy Center**  
**Tuesday, June 6 • 5:00–7:00 pm**

Please visit [scripps.org/SPTConnect](http://scripps.org/SPTConnect) to RSVP or email [SPTConnect@scrippshealth.org](mailto:SPTConnect@scrippshealth.org) with questions.



is a quarterly newsletter for Scripps Proton Therapy Center patients, their families, and others interested in proton therapy treatment. We invite you to stay up to date with the latest proton news and developments, both here at Scripps and around the world. We hope you enjoy the newsletter, and we welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues. Email us at [SPTConnect@scrippshealth.org](mailto:SPTConnect@scrippshealth.org).



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Mark Your  
Calendars!  
  
2nd Annual  
Patient Event  
*See back panel  
for details*

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