Our Journey with Melanoma and OncoVEX

After noticing **THE SPOT** on Dad's head the summer of 2009, I ask him to check with his GP to see if it was something to be concerned with. Dad would always tell me it was just fine. Having several basal cell carcinoma removed myself, I knew it was not something to prolong investigating. Not long after Dad's 80th birthday on , I made him an appointment with a dermitologist with an office in (b) (6) . They did a biospy and after several phone calls, finally got the results in their office that it was melanoma. They quickly got Dad an appointment at (b) (6) to discuss surgery. They said the tumor was stage 2-B. Also, during this time Dad's died on (b) (6) .

The initial surgery was on to remove the tumor and possible infected lymph nodes. I believe at that time of surgery, they had said that the turmor had advanced to stage 4 in a very short time. At the checkup on was informed that the lymph nodes removed had been identified with melonoma and another surgery would be needed. We were told to help Dad to get his affairs in order because he may only have about 6 months to live. The 2nd surgery was on (b) (6) to remove more lymph nodes in his face and neck. On , I noticed more spots coming up around the initial surgery area on his forehead. appointment with (b) (6) to check the new spots and get the results for the 2nd surgery. It was thought that all infected lymph nodes were removed. But the question was how to treat the new ones. You just couldn't take the entire scalp off each time a spot came up. Dad's case was transferred over to for evaluation. It was brought to our attention that there may be a clinical trial but was unsure if Dad would qualify. In the meantime, we were refered over to (b) (6) in Dermitology to see if shaving and Aldara would take care of the new growth. Then Dad was hospitalized on (b) (6) with a urinary tract infection. After a week and with the helping hands of God, great hospital and staff (and drugs), we thought we could now focus on how to get rid of the new spots coming up.

In March 2010, started the treatments with Aldara. It would take a full pack or more to cover the new growths. Along with the treatment came the ulcers. We knew it must be attacking something, but having been a user of Aldara myself, I knew how painful it must be for Dad. At the end of April, (b) (6) (b) (6) said that he was not seeing the reaction to the Aldara that he was hoping for and would be referring us back over (b) (6) to see if he qualified for a clinical trial now.

During the visit in May 2010, Dad signed the consent form for the clinical trial for OncoVEX. Then the waiting game began in hopes that Dad would be accepted into the program. May 25, 2010 was a great day. We got the news that Dad was accepted. The sponsor wanted to do the randomization on June 1st to see if he would get the GMSCF shots at home or OncoVEX injections at the doctor's office. So the work began to schedule appointments for testing and waiting on the lottery outcome. We won the lottery we wanted and would be having the treatments at (b) (6) I believe by this time there were over 70+ spots on Dad's head that would have to be treated. It started our every 2 weeks trips to (b) (6). That was until November 23, 2010. We had the all clear. NO CANCER could be found on Dad's head. It was going to be a great time to plan Christmas instead of a funeral. <u>Since then Dad has been completely free of melanoma.</u>

That year of our life is over, but still fresh in our minds today. As I write this now, I am grateful to have kept the emails I would send out to the family and friends with updates and discussions on

treatments, progress and pictures. Dad would sometimes just roll his eyes when I pulled the camera out.

We have so many things to be thankful for. To have been given the opportunity to participate in the clinical trial that might give a longer, quality of life with my Dad, was a prayer answered. Dad went into this clinical trial with eyes wide open. He said that if what he was able to be a part of the study that might help him and others that it was what was meant to be. Quite honestly, I don't remember any of the side effects that were identified as a possibility on the consent paperwork. And Dad didn't have any reactions to the drug that I'm aware of. Dad was such a trooper. On his 80th birthday, he was a very active man that still was (b) (6) (b) (6) even told us once that he wasn't treating Dad like most 80 year old men, because he was like someone that was around 65. But to be given the news that you need to get your Dad's affairs in order was very scary. I had lost my mother to (b) (6), and wasn't about to lose my father without trying everything possible to keep him a little longer.

Having been a (b) (6) all his life, Dad was a strong candidate for skin cancer. Hats were very seldom available and there was no such thing as sunscreen. Staying out of the sun was not an option when you needed to put food on the table and a roof over our head. My brother reminded me that Dad had always been afraid of needles but he would sit so still while Nurse (b) (6) would administer the shots. By the look on her face you would think it was hurting her more than it was Dad. Beside God and the OncoVex drug, I contribute a lot of Dad's success to his positive attitude (otherwise known as stubbornness), the committed care that he received at (b) (6), and lots of prayers by everyone.

I've told (b) (6) and (b) (6) that we wanted to shout from the mountain tops about how wonderful life is to be melanoma free. How everyone should have the same chance as Dad did to have a longer life. I've relayed Dad's story to my own dermatologist, GP, strangers and anyone that would listen. Dad would tell me of a man in our home town that had melanoma like him but only received the surgery. This man had a lot more side effects from his surgery, than Dad, but both had loss use of some of their facial muscles and numbness. Even almost 5 years later, Dad still have numbness in his face and issues with his false teeth because of loss of facial muscles. It would break my heart when I would hear of someone that had lost the battle to melanoma.

Dad is the oldest of (b) (6). We have a very close and large family. Dad help to start the tradition over 60 years ago with my Grandfather (b) (6) From this clinical trial, it makes me think about how many people just in our immediate family that has been touched with its success.

Please, please vote to release this miracle drug to the public. We pray that the doctors and nurses are properly trained on how to administer the treatments so that others will have the chance for a longer, quality life by having won that battle against melanoma.

Thank you

(b) (6)