Doctor Is Cancer-Free Following World-First Treatment He Developed

Australian of the Year Richard Scolyer treated his brain cancer using an experimental immunotherapy he and his team developed.

June 19, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Since his diagnosis with incurable Stage IV brain cancer in 2023, Australian doctor Richard Scolyer revealed that he has been cancer-free for a year after undergoing a world-first treatment based on his own research on immunotherapy to treat melanoma, a type of skin cancer, according to BBC.

Last year, following a seizure, Scolyer, an esteemed pathologist, was diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive brain tumor that affects more than 300,000 people every year globally. The five-year survival rate for glioblastoma patients in the United States is only 6.9%, and the average length of survival is about eight months, according to the National Brain Tumor Society.



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A post shared by Prof Richard Scolyer AO - My Uncertain Path (@profrscolyer)

One of Australia's most esteemed medical experts, Scolyer, 57, was named the 2024 Australian of the Year alongside his Melanoma Institute Australia co–medical director Georgina Long in recognition of their lifesaving research.

For the last decade, Scolyer and Long have researched immunotherapy to treat patients with advanced melanoma. Immunotherapy uses the body's immune system to attack cancer cells. The pair's research has significantly improved outcomes, according to the BBC. In fact, half of their patients are essentially cured, compared with 10% at the start of their research.

Long discovered that immunotherapy for melanoma was more effective when used in combination with drugs and administered before surgery to remove a tumor.

Following this discovery, Scolyer became the first brain cancer patient to undergo combination presurgery immunotherapy. He is also the first person to receive a vaccine personalized to his tumor's characteristics, boosting the drug's effectiveness.

After undergoing the experimental therapy and experiencing some adverse reactions, including epileptic seizures and liver issues, Scolyer shared that his latest MRI scan showed no evidence of the tumor recurring.

"It certainly doesn't mean that my brain cancer is cured... but it's just nice to know that it hasn't come back yet, so I've still got some more time to enjoy my life with my wife, Katie, and my three wonderful kids," he told the BBC.

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Long notes that “we’re not there yet” when it comes to developing an approved and regulated course of treatment, which could take years. Nevertheless, the promising results may bring hope to the hundreds of thousands of people diagnosed with brain cancer every year.

“By undertaking an experimental treatment with risk of shortening his life, he has advanced the understanding of brain cancer and is benefiting future patients,” the University of Sydney said as it named Scolyer and Long the Australians of the Year, according to Sky News.

To read more, click #Glioblastoma or Cancer Health’s Basics on Brain Tumors. It reads in part:

> Who gets brain cancer?
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> Brain cancer is uncommon, and the lifetime risk of developing a malignant tumor of the brain or spinal cord is less than 1%. About 25,400 brain and spinal cord cancers are diagnosed in the United States each year, and about 18,760 people die from these cancers annually, according to the American Cancer Society.
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> What are the risk factors for brain cancer?
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> Many types of brain cancer have no known risk factors, and in most cases, there is no clear cause. Genetic factors, environmental toxins, radiation to the head and cigarette smoking have all been linked to cancers of the brain and spinal cord. Some inherited diseases, such as neurofibromatosis and retinoblastoma, increase the risk for central nervous system tumors. HIV infection is also associated with an increased risk for some brain cancers.
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> What are the symptoms of brain cancer?
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> Many brain tumors do not cause symptoms. Some are found accidentally if brain imaging with a computed tomography (CT) or MRI scan is done for another reason. When symptoms do occur, they vary depending on which part of the brain or spinal cord is affected. Common symptoms may include:
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> –Headache
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> –Weakness or paralysis
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> –Nausea or vomiting
>
> –Clumsiness or lack of coordination

–Difficulty walking

–Seizures

–Changes in vision, hearing, touch or taste

–Speech problems

–Mood, personality or behavior changes

–Mental confusion, trouble concentrating or memory problems.

Many people with brain cancer do not develop symptoms until its late stages, when it is harder to treat.

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/doctor-cancerfree-following-worldfirst-treatment-developed