

Encouraged by a Physician He Saw in the Philippines, Stage 3 Lung Cancer Patient Turned to Fred Hutch

Proton therapy was the right treatment plan for lung cancer patient Gerardo Bada.

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When Gerardo Bada started to [feel lightheaded, short of breath, nauseated and unstable on his feet](#) in June 2023, he decided that for his safety, he should retire from his job as a maintenance worker. The 65-year-old Bellingham, Wash., resident frequently worked on the roof of buildings and/or used a ladder.

Two months later, he had a stroke and was taken to the emergency room. The stroke resolved well but while recovering, his care team discovered a mass in his right lung that needed to be treated immediately. This, he learned, was the cause of the symptoms he'd experienced prior to the stroke.

Bada was scared and surprised by the turn of events — he hadn't anticipated needing to see an oncologist.

"I went home to the Philippines to be treated. I felt that whatever happened, at least I would be in my hometown, Olongapo," he said. "But my oncologist there said, 'You have to go back to Washington. They have one of the best cancer clinics in the world: Fred Hutch Cancer Center.'"

Bada had never heard of it, but his physician strongly encouraged him to return to Washington state. Bada had been diagnosed with stage 4 non-small-cell lung cancer, and if he stayed, his physician estimated he'd live about six more months.

He returned to the U.S. in early 2024 and his son, Gerald, called Fred Hutch for a consultation. They brought all the reports from the Philippines and met with [Edmond Marzbani, MD](#), and [John Kang, MD, PhD](#). After reviewing the reports, his care team downgraded his tumor to stage 3c and started treatment right away — a combination of chemotherapy and proton radiation for eight weeks, followed by 12 months of [immunotherapy](#). His last infusion is scheduled for March 2025.

"They explained to me that proton therapy would target the tumor and not damage the healthy tissue around it," Bada said. "And that it was very accurate. Immediately I said 'yes.'"

“Dr. Kang is very wonderful, very friendly, my whole family admires him and the team. They made me feel so at home.”

A radiation oncologist specializing in lung cancer, Kang said the size of the tumor was significant.

“Mr. Bada’s tumor was quite large and the area that needed to receive radiation also included [mediastinal](#) lymph nodes on the other side of the body from the tumor,” he explained. “Proton radiation was better able to spare the heart and lungs.”

Bada said his side effects from proton therapy were minimal compared to what he experienced with chemotherapy; side effects included fatigue and skin burns on his chest, which he said was very sore.

During treatment, Bada and his wife, Michelle, stayed in Seattle and went for short walks every day in the University District and the city’s many parks.

Bada’s support from his wife as well as family around the world, helped him get through his treatment.

“I looked forward every day to 6 a.m., when my granddaughter called from the Philippines,” he said. “And at 3 p.m., my grandsons would call from Australia. I felt very supported by my whole family.”

That support meant the world to him.

“Although it is very scary to have stage three or four cancer, being positive and having the support of your family and friends helps so much,” he said. “Dr. Kang and rest of the team reassured me throughout the procedure and helped make it a very good experience, much lighter. When you are with the right people, you can forget your negative thoughts.”

One of Bada’s favorite things is seeing the sunset or sunrise from a beach, especially in Olongapo, but also in Bellingham and Bondi Beach, Australia, near where his son lives. He still has some shortness of breath and fatigue, he said, so sitting on the beach is “a good hobby to have.”

“I am doing great right now,” Bada said. “I just went to see Dr. Marzbani, and he told me that things are looking good. I will continue to have check-ups to monitor [recurrence of] the cancer, but the care team is very reassuring. I highly recommend them.”

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