

Updates From Four Cancer Patients Who Had Proton Therapy

Proton patients at Fred Hutch share their goals. Combined, they had Hodgkin lymphoma and breast, brain and throat cancers.

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The turn of the calendar year marks a natural time to check in, evaluate goals, measure success and reset for the coming year, and former patients of Fred Hutch Cancer Center – Proton Therapy are no different. Four patients shared updates on their health and their goals for the year.

[Matt Randall](#), age 30, from Tacoma, Wash., was diagnosed with his third bout of cancer in 2020 — he went through childhood cancer twice. This time it was Hodgkin lymphoma, a rare lymphoma subtype. Randall finished treatment in March 2022 and recently received news from his care team that a surgical biopsy revealed no signs of lymphoma.

Randall is starting his junior year at the University of Washington, working towards a bachelor's degree in psychology with a focus on mental health counseling.

"I decided to study mental health because I struggled significantly with my own mental health while battling cancer during the pandemic," he said.

"I'm also very relationship-oriented and have the gift of gab, so if I can get paid to listen and talk with others through hardships, then I'll be using my innate skills for good."

His plans for the year are to study hard in the spring, fall and winter, and spend time outdoors rock climbing in the summer.

"My favorite place to climb is on Mt. Erie on Washington's Fidalgo Island," he said. "With no need for further treatment as of right now, I can spend more time having fun."

[Kathy Gill](#) was treated at Fred Hutch for a type of breast cancer called invasive lobular carcinoma in 2017.

Gill went through treatment and was cancer free for several years, however, her physicians discovered small cancer lesions on her spine in the spring of 2024. She was tested to see if she

could join a clinical trial; so far, she has responded very well to her new treatment.

“The daily [cancer inhibiting] pills can leave me feeling a bit fatigued, but I’ve learned to nap without guilt,” she said. “I’m grateful to be living near such a first-class cancer center as Fred Hutch.”

Gill resolved to stay busy despite cancer treatment. She retired from the University of Washington last July after teaching there for 21 years. Now she’s auditing classes through [Washington ACCESS Program](#), which provides discounted tuition to Washington state residents aged 60 and older, space-permitting.

She’s also looking forward to traveling in between her classes.

“My husband and I are going to Iceland and Scotland in May, scheduled in between my monthly estrogen-blocking injections,” said Gill. “We are both very excited because it’s been several years since we were in Europe. I’m also planning an annual April trip with five women to the Outer Banks. We’ll share a house on the beach. It’s the first time I have been the chief planner!”

Gill also plans to remodel her kitchen and hopes to resume weekly qigong sessions with other cancer patients and survivors, whom she met through Cancer Lifeline in 2017.

[Hedley Elliot](#) and his mother, Alaynna Elliot, are doing well and staying optimistic after Hedley, at 8 years old, received proton therapy for a third brain cancer recurrence in summer 2023. He and his family traveled from their home in California following guidance from their brain tumor team and radiation oncologist, who thought proton radiation might be able to destroy any lingering tumor cells.

“Now, we’re on a good track with our health and happiness for all our family,” said Alaynna Elliot.

This past winter, some of Hedley’s Australian relatives visited them in California. They spent time together in Lake Tahoe drawing, watching movies and reconnecting as a family.

“I think being able to make life as normal as possible is important,” Elliot said. “Having support from family and friends is such a big part of normalcy.”

Hedley will start middle school this fall because his growth was stunted due to the tumor and the subsequent treatment he had when he was 4, he’s taking growth hormones to help him catch up on his height.

“Both mean that he’s growing up and hopefully growing taller, too,” said Elliot. “This year we’re looking forward — to making plans for middle school and seeing what comes in the next school chapter.”

[David Rosenberg](#) was diagnosed in early 2023 with throat cancer, shortly after having received neurosurgery for a spine condition. His throat cancer was treated with proton therapy since the precision of proton therapy means more healthy tissue is spared from radiation.

Although he found the science behind proton therapy fascinating, Rosenberg said he especially appreciated the staff.

His scans and scopes continue to show no evidence of disease. He does have lingering side effects like some [lymphedema](#) in his neck and chin. And, as a result of the spine surgery and radiation, he has some discomfort in his neck for which he sees Fred Hutch's [physical therapists](#).

"Emotionally, I feel grateful every day," said Rosenberg. "I have the same sources of stress that most people have, including sending my daughter to college next year. However, I put these into context because less than two years ago, my goal was just to be there when she went to college."

Because he feels so grateful for the care he received, Rosenberg began to volunteer as a [patient advisor](#) with Fred Hutch.

"I am really looking forward to participating and helping others," he said. "It feels like 2025 will be an important year because I am reaching the two-year post-treatment. I really look forward to seeing what happens and how I can make a positive impact."

Rosenberg said that having had cancer made him want to be the best he can, each day. In addition to giving back as an advisor, he's trying to visit more new places, make dinners together with his family and catch some live music when he can. He's working out and enjoying life.

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