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RADIOSURGERY ALLOWS DOUG FIEGER OF THE KNACK TO PERFORM WHILE BATTLING BRAIN TUMORS

LOS ANGELES (May 11, 2007) – When singer/songwriter/guitarist Doug Fieger, lead singer of The Knack, found out last year that he had two brain tumors, he was concerned that either the tumors or the side effects of surgery would leave him unable to pursue his livelihood. Fieger co-wrote “My Sharona,” which was featured on The Knack’s debut album and went to the top of the charts in 1979, and he has been writing and performing since.

But during a performance in Las Vegas he became disoriented, developed a dull headache and grasped for the words to songs that he had written and performed for years. When he returned to Los Angeles, he went to a doctor who referred him to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and neurosurgeon John Yu, M.D.

Yu performed two procedures last August. The larger tumor was removed through a traditional, “open” surgery, or craniotomy, but the smaller tumor was situated in a critical location that demanded special attention.

“That tumor was in the motor area of his brain, and removing it surgically would have left him weak in his arm and probably unable to play the guitar,” says Yu, who performed the radiosurgical procedure using the Radionics X-Knife™ system with radiation oncologist Behrooz Hakimian, M.D. “Compared to a craniotomy, radiosurgery not only spared the feeling in his fingers so he could play guitar but also allowed him to maintain his overall mental sharpness so that he could actually write songs again.”

With the recurrence of a couple of small tumors, Fieger has been back for additional radiosurgery with Cedars-Sinai’s new Gamma Knife® -- once in December 2006 and again near the end of March 2007. Yu is co-director of the Comprehensive Brain Tumor Program and director of the Gamma Knife Center at the Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute. The Gamma Knife complements the capabilities of the X-Knife.

“The Gamma Knife delivers a full dose of radiation in one session. It is a fixed system that is extremely precise, which makes it an excellent choice for treating trigeminal neuralgias and other ‘functional’ abnormalities. But in certain situations, such as a lesion around the optic nerve, there are advantages to providing ‘fractionated’ treatment – dividing therapy into multiple, smaller, daily doses. For this, the X-Knife is ideal,” says Keith L. Black, M.D., chair of the medical center’s Department of Neurosurgery and director of the Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute.

Fieger also has undergone chemotherapy, beginning a second course in March, because PET scans (positron emission tomography) indicate suspicious activity that may be cancer cells in lymph tissue or fluid.

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But despite the interruptions, Fieger has continued to perform – New York City last November, Orange County on New Year’s Eve, and Connecticut’s Foxwoods Resort Casino in January. In March, he performed in a charity concert at the Malibu Performing Arts Center.

“You can’t lie down. You can’t stop your life. I’m not waiting for my life to happen; it’s happening,” he says.

To rejuvenate himself and counter the effects of chemotherapy, Fieger, who has been a vegetarian for many years, is in what he refers to as “full-time health mode,” using complementary therapies, such as acupuncture, and nurturing a positive attitude. He gardens, swims, practices yoga and plays his guitar. He also draws on a sense of humor that frequently makes its way into his conversations.

“As all of my doctors have expressed to me ... attitude and outlook and positive thoughts, and also how you treat your body, with meditation and exercise – all of those things are vitally and critically important to survival and to beating cancer. You can’t live an unhealthy lifestyle and be a really negative person and hope to survive cancer because the nature of the disease is that it feeds on stuff like that,” says Fieger.

It is no secret that Fieger’s lifestyle in his younger years was not focused on taking care of his health, a fact, he says, that may have played a role in the health problems that later emerged.

“I haven’t had a drink or a drug in 23 years, and I quit smoking – unfortunately, not soon enough. I quit smoking 20 years ago but now scientists are finding that the window of opportunity for cancer from cigarettes is a lot longer than they thought,” he says. Three years ago, a full-body imaging scan detected in one of his lungs a small cancer, which was surgically removed.

“Unfortunately, it had already metastasized. It did not show up in any scans of my lungs for three years, but microscopic cells had found their way into my brain,” says Fieger, who now returns to Cedars-Sinai every few months for tests and scans. But even as he wages his own battles against cancer, he hopes to help others who may find themselves in a similar situation.

“Don’t stop living your life. Do every possible thing you can to build up your body. Stop doing anything that might be hurtful to your body. Eat really well, exercise, stop smoking and stop eating junk food,” he advises. “I’m here to tell you that you can get through it. I can’t tell you it’s fun. But going through it, I have to say, is nowhere near as bad as the fear of going through it. The fear of having cancer is way worse than the reality of having cancer.”

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