

Early Detection Buys Time When Dealing with Cancer

Pain and swelling after eating a meal was Randy Veillon's first clue that something was wrong. Unexplained weight gain soon followed. Initially thinking it was an ulcer, he saw his doctor in January, had some medical tests and discovered he had a more serious condition: cancer. Large B-cell lymphoma was the actual diagnosis; part of the non-Hodgkin's lymphoma group of cancers.

"As with anyone on the receiving end of that kind of news, hearing the diagnosis took me by surprise. I wasn't expecting anything like that," Veillon said. An MRI confirmed the diagnosis and Veillon was advised to see Dr. Goolsby, a local oncologist.

"B-cell lymphoma is a type of cancer made up of lymphocytes. These are the white blood cells in our bodies that produce antibodies to fight infections and create our immune memory. These T and B lymphocyte cells are crucial to building and maintaining a strong immune system," explained Henry Goolsby, MD, oncologist with The Clinic. "Unfortunately, they can mutate and become cancerous, creating a clone of cancerous B or T-cells that spread through the lymphatic system and the organs of the body."

Until this point, Veillon said he hadn't seen a doctor for much more than blood pressure checks. He, like many, knows exercise and nutrition were key components for good health and his job as an appliance service technician, along with his hobby of hunting and fishing, kept him pretty active. "I like a good meal as much as anyone, but didn't have a significant weight problem," he said. "I'd say I was moderately health conscious before all of this happened."

Veillon has had six chemotherapy treatments and his latest report is that the tumor, which was initially the size of a nerf football, has dissolved. Surgery isn't recommended since the tumor is responding well to the treatment.

"If we can catch the cancer before it spreads, we have a much higher chance of treating or removing it, as in the case of Mr. Veillon," said Dr. Goolsby. "Checking with your primary care doctor about any unusual lumps, pain or discomfort is best. Nine times out of 10, there's nothing to worry about. If there is, you've done yourself a favor by catching it early."

A resident of Moss Bluff, Veillon considered going to Houston to get treatment. "I know there are quite a few people who choose to go out of town and I considered it for a little while. Dr. Goolsby said he'd work with me however I wanted to do it, but after I looked into it, I decided to stay right here," he said. "I'm really glad I did. Not just for the convenience factor, but also because I have confidence in the health care workers in our area that are providing my treatment."

As far as prevention is concerned, researchers and scientists are working to narrow down the possible causes of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Studying how normal cells grow, divide and die is crucial in understanding how they might mutate. There have been recent findings of a possible link between *Helicobacter pylori* infection, or *H. pylori* and some lymphomas of the stomach,

but it is in the infancy stage of research and many more studies must be done to even verify the connection.

“Prompt attention to any health concern is the best preventive medicine,” said Dr. Goolsby.

The Clinic is one of the sponsors of the Fight Cancer with Facts educational campaign.