

**: Swift treatment of spinal tumor helps to save Plainfield man's life**

ID: 0000796491

Surgery

**Kick:****Swift treatment of spinal tumor helps to save Plainfield man's life**By [Kristina Cowan](#)

Edward-Elmhurst Health

Spending New Year's Eve in the hospital wasn't what Manuel Hernandez and his wife, Lorena, had in mind. But if they hadn't, he might not be able to walk today.

Hernandez went to Edward Hospital for an MRI of his spine on Dec. 31, 2015, after six months of increasing back pain and several sessions with a chiropractor, which made him feel worse. On reviewing the initial MRI, radiologist LeRoy Stromberg of Naperville Radiologists discovered a large tumor on the lower portion of Hernandez's spine.

Given the tumor's size, doctors were amazed he was still walking, and kept him in the hospital so they could begin treatment as soon as possible. A delay would've left Hernandez permanently paralyzed from the waist down, said Michael Caron, a neurosurgeon at the Edward Neurosciences Institute, in affiliation with Northwestern Medicine.

Hernandez's treatment plan included surgery on Jan. 6, 2016, to remove the tumor and stabilize the spine, followed by radiation and chemotherapy. On Jan. 5, he underwent a diagnostic spinal angiogram and tumor embolization performed by Sameer Ansari, an interventional neuroradiologist with the institute.

In this procedure, Ansari located the arteries feeding the tumor and obliterated nearly 90 percent of the blood flow supplying the tumor. This, in turn, would reduce the amount of blood Hernandez would lose the next day during the operation, allowing for safe and more complete removal of the tumor.

Caron teamed up with another neurosurgeon at the institute, William Schueler, to perform the surgery, which lasted between five and six hours and included two parts: tumor removal and spinal fusion.

They first peeled the muscles from the spine to expose the tumor, and Caron removed it. Schueler then set about the second part of the surgery — fusing the affected vertebrae together with screws and rods.

The doctors used bone chips and bone cement to fill in gaps left when the tumor was removed. Bone chips come from donors, and they're akin to honeycomb, Caron said, with all of the donor's cells removed. The blood cells of the receiving patient move into the chips and form new bone.

Hernandez went home on Jan. 9 and soon after started radiation, followed by chemotherapy, which left him feeling fatigued. He also had trouble eating and sleeping, so after several months, he quit the chemo

treatments.

“He said, ‘No. I don’t want to keep living this way. I prefer quality (of life) to quantity,’” according to his wife, Lorena.

In the time since, he’s returned to eating and sleeping well. He also exercises regularly, walking on a treadmill and swimming.

“If you saw my husband before the surgery, the way he is now is 100 percent better,” Lorena said.

As it turns out, this wasn’t Hernandez’s first lifesaving surgery at Edward. In 2008, he suffered a work-related injury and sought treatment at the hospital. While there, doctors discovered a large, cancerous tumor on his left kidney, which was later removed.

Fortunately, the tumor was completely enclosed, so he didn’t require follow-up radiation or chemotherapy.

For information about neurosciences at Edward-Elmhurst Health, visit [EEHealth.org/services/neuro](http://EEHealth.org/services/neuro).

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| <b>Category:</b>                   | Dup NBR                  |
| <b>No. of lines:</b>               | 123                      |
| <b>Product name:</b>               | Daily Herald             |
| <b>Publication date:</b>           | Thursday, March 30, 2017 |
| <b>Creation date:</b>              | Tuesday, March 28, 2017  |
| <b>Archive date:</b>               | Thursday, March 30, 2017 |
| <b>Database:</b>                   | PPAR                     |
| <b>Page number:</b>                | 3                        |
| <b>pnSectionPagenumberAndName:</b> | 53                       |
| <b>Category:</b>                   | Neighbor                 |
| <b>Planned flow type:</b>          | ContentDriven            |
| <b>Section:</b>                    | NBR                      |
| <b>Section number:</b>             | 5                        |
| <b>Author:</b>                     | Bob Smith                |
| <b>Format:</b>                     | 4col 33p                 |
| <b>Area:</b>                       | DuPage                   |
| <b>Article type:</b>               | Article                  |