



"The Gray Matter" is a monthly publication of WNC Brain Tumor Support.
828-691-2559---www.wncbraintumor.org---wncbts@bellsouth.net

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George Plym is an 11-time brain tumor survivor. He is the founder and president of WNC Brain Tumor Support.

From the desk of George....

I hope that everybody is having a good summer and doing all of the things you want to do for vacation! The idea for taking a break for a month was voted on in the April meeting. In time for people to take a needed break from brain tumors, radiation, chemo and work! Of course, I realize that you can't stop your chemo treatments or radiation, but you can change your routine just a little bit. I know a lot of you went to the beach, some went to the lake. Hope you had a great time!

I kind of took a break myself... Sorta...! I went to Illinois and visited my folks. But I did not get away from brain tumors. As a matter-of-fact, I was knee-deep with brain tumor stuff! On Thursday 7/9, I attended the "Sharing Hope," the annual American Brain Tumor Association conference at the Lincolnshire Marriott in Chicago. It was absolutely one of the most enlightening conferences that I have ever gone to!

After driving for nearly 3 hours to Chicago from my parents home town, I finally found the hotel. It was very tense driving 75 to 80 miles an hour on a six lane expressway! I missed my first turn off so I stopped by a gas station to get my directions straighten out. As I got out of my car, my hat was jerked right off of my head with winds up to 60 mph! The last time I saw my hat, it was heading for Milwaukee! When I went to get the directions inside, the attendant at the register did not speak English... I was on my own. The next exit was 5 miles away so I went there only to find out that that exit was closed for repairs. I finally got off of the toll way in downtown Chicago. But that was not where I had to go! I had to go to the north side of Chicago! I started watching the air traffic around O'Hare Airport. I knew that the hotel was north of the airport. I finally found somebody who could speak English and gave me very good directions to the hotel.

I checked into the hotel and rested for a bit. About nine o'clock that night I went to the lobby to sit down and watched the people enter and check in. Then in the corner of my eye, I recognized a familiar face. I stood up and said, "Hey, Dave!" He turned around and look at me and said, "Hey, how you doing?" It was Dave Bailey! For those of you who do not know who David Bailey is, David is a very famous singer/writer and also known as a GBM brain tumor survivor! I had met David on other occasions, and our group, WNC Brain Support Tumor Support had seen him in concert in Montreat, North Carolina.

So Dave and I went over to the snack shop where Dave treated me to a ice cream bar. We went back into the lobby where we were met by Kathy Oliver (the secretary of the International Brain Tumor Alliance in the United Kingdom), and her son, Colin (who is a brain tumor survivor himself). We talked for a while before David excused himself. Kathy and I continued to talk about brain tumors and my survivor story which by the way, she had already read online! That was neat!

As we were talking, I noticed another familiar face checking in. It was Roz Rudy and her son, Mike! Roz is an AA III survivor and we have been talking on the phone and e-mailing each other for at least three years now. But we had never met each other in person! I told Kathy that we had not met before and to watch the reaction of Roz. So I snuck behind Roz and waited... I was about 2 inches away from her when she turned around and walked right into me. I yelled to her, "Hey lady... Watch where you're going!" Roz looked me for a instant and yelled back, "Geoooooerrrrrr!!!! You are here!! We hugged each other and I think all of us including Mike and Kathy got a little bit emotional as we all had tears in our eyes. Roz has done a lot of research for me and is technically on my staff as a research corresponding reporter and is amember of our group, Western North Carolina Brain Tumor Support. It was a great night and the conference hadn't even started yet!

The two-day program culminated on Saturday with a final reception where participants shared hugs, e-mail addresses, and good wishes. See the following article for information about the conference.

Check out the pictures of the conference in our scrapbook (coming soon).

George Plym
President, WNC BTS

Sharing Hope Program Brings Together Brain Tumor Patients & Survivors with Young Cancer Researchers--CHICAGO

Young, talented researchers, funded by the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA) over the past one-to-two years, were able to showcase their scientific efforts and findings with the people who matter most – brain tumor patients, survivors and their families.

The unique exchange was part of the ABTA's two-day Sharing Hope program, held June 8 and 9, 2007 at the Lincolnshire Marriott in Lincolnshire, IL. The ABTA hosts similar programs throughout the country each year, bringing together medical experts with brain tumor patients, survivors and family members for seminars and information exchanges outside of the typical clinical setting. More than 400 people attended last weekend's event.

The Friday Notable Research Reception showcased the work of 29 ABTA-funded researchers, said ABTA Executive Director Naomi Berkowitz. For many of the researchers, the event provided a first-ever opportunity to actually meet with the patients for whom their work is so critical. "The intent of the ABTA research awards is to encourage talented scientists early in their careers to enter, or remain in, the field of brain tumor research," said Berkowitz. In 2007, to date, the ABTA has awarded more than \$2 million in research grants. "Today we have 360,000 brain tumor survivors," said Berkowitz. "We could not have made that statement ten or more years ago. This is progress. For this we thank the scientists dedicated to neuro-oncology."

Advances in brain tumor diagnosis and treatment are "exploding," said Dr. Nicholas A. Vick, professor of neurology at the Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine and the event moderator. "There is unbelievable growth in the basic science" pertaining to the cell and molecular growth that causes brain tumors. "We're on the cusp of a new era. Chemotherapy and radiation may soon be supplanted by drugs that act in totally different ways."

Each of the 29 researchers brought a graphic display highlighting their scientific findings. The researchers were grouped by topic: Tumorigenesis, Angiogenesis, Medulloblastoma; Resistance and Progression; Regulation, Signaling and Movement; and Therapies.

Dr. Vick and four discussants – one for each topic – summarized the research and explained the scientific terminology. After the overview, patients and family members were encouraged to view the displays and ask questions of the individual researchers.

"You don't know how much I appreciate" meeting with patients, said Nathalie Agar, Ph.D., a 2005-2007 ABTA Research Fellow working at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston, Mass. on cellular movement in gliomas (the most common type of primary brain tumor). "I'm a basic scientist with little patient interaction, so tonight makes it very real," said Agar. "Now I'll go back to my work and think 'this is why I'm doing this.'"

Dorothy Drake, of Woodridge, IL, an oligodendroglioma brain tumor survivor, said "It's absolutely fascinating to actually talk to people involved in brain tumor research. All of this is about the future. I want to tell these researchers: 'Think of me; think of my face and the people here tonight that you're working to help.'

"I am so grateful that people are able to provide the funding for this research; it reinforces a sense of hope," said Drake.

In addition to the research reception, Sharing Hope attendees were able to choose from a wide-range of educational seminars on topics including brain tumor basics, treatment advances, financial assistance, coping tips, behavioral and personality changes following brain surgery, stress management, living with the "new normal" after a brain tumor diagnosis, caregiver guidelines, and the treatment of pediatric patients.

Earlier on Friday, participants attended a David Bailey concert. Bailey, a 10-year survivor of a malignant brain tumor and an award-winning songwriter, performed selections from his 14 inspirational and moving albums, challenging listeners to live passionately and treasure each day.

Gadolinium Side Effects Lawsuit

Gadolinium Based Contrast Agents have been linked to a serious, life-threatening skin disorder called Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF) or Nephrogenic Fibrosing Dermopathy (NFD).

If you or somebody you know has developed a skin irritation or a problem with limb mobility after having received an MRI or MRA, you need to speak with your doctor immediately. These symptoms may be associated with an underlying kidney or liver problem and the development of NSF or NFD.

In addition, you may be entitled to compensation if you have developed NSF or NFD after having received an injection of gadolinium-based contrast agents during an MRI or MRA. Please click the following link to contact us for a free confidential case evaluation.

What is the problem?

UPDATE: Read the May 23, 2007 FDA press release, "FDA Requests Boxed Warning for Contrast Agents Used to Improve MRI Images." The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has requested the manufacturers of gadolinium-based contrast agents to add a new boxed warning on the product labeling because of new reports linking the agents to a life-threatening skin disorder.

The requested boxed warning would state:

"Patients with severe kidney insufficiency who receive gadolinium-based agents are at risk for developing a debilitating, and a potentially fatal disease known as Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF). In addition, it would state that patients just before or just after liver transplantation, or those with chronic liver disease, are also at risk for developing NSF if they are experiencing kidney insufficiency of any severity."

What are Gadolinium Based Contrast Agents?

Gadolinium-based contrast agents are often used to improve the visibility of internal structures when patients undergo an MRI or MRA. These gadolinium based contrast agents are injected into veins of the patient so that the physician can view a clear and detailed picture of a patient's internal organs, tissues, bones and/or vessels.

Five gadolinium-based contrast agents have been approved for use in the United States:

Magnevist (gadopentetate dimeglumine)

Omniscan (gadodiamide)

OptiMARK (gadoversetamide)

MultiHance (gadobenate dimeglumine)

Prohance (gadoteridol)

What is the MRI or MRA used for?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRIs) and Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRAs) are typically ordered by physicians in order to detect abnormalities such as tumors, clots, bleeds, and related medical problems.

What is Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF)?

Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF), also known as Nephrogenic Fibrosing Dermopathy (NFD), is a skin condition that is often described as a swelling and tightening of the skin, usually limited to the extremities. The condition may develop over a short period of days or could take weeks to fully develop. Severely affected patients may be unable to walk, or fully extend the joints of their arms, hands, legs, and feet. Complaints of muscle weakness are common.

Do I have a Gadolinium Lawsuit?

The Products Liability Litigation Group at our law firm is an experienced team of trial lawyers that focus exclusively on the representation of plaintiffs in Gadolinium lawsuits. We are handling individual litigation nationwide and currently accepting new Gadolinium side effect cases in all 50 states.

Attention Attorneys: We do not publish prior verdict/settlements. If you are an attorney and would like to refer us a case or for us to send you a profile of prior award judgments or average referral fees, please visit the attorney referral section of our website.

<http://www.schmidandclark.com/Gadolinium/>

5th Annual WNC Brain Tumor Support Picnic

The WNC Brain Tumor Support 6th Annual Brain Tumor Survivor's Picnic will be Thursday, Sept 20 at Lake Tomahawk in Black Mountain! If you appreciate life and are thankful for everyday, join us for an evening of food, fun and relaxation! Bring you family too!

Food will be served around 6:30.

Bring a cover dish...Drinks, meat, bread, plates are provided by WNC BTS!

DIRECTIONS TO LAKE TOMAHAWK BLACK MT.

Off I-40: Exit 64 Black Mt.

Go to 3rd red light, and turn left. That will be Hwy 70. Go to the 3rd red light, (there will be a CVS drug store there)and turn right on to Craigmont Rd. Go 1/2 mile and turn right onto Tomahawk Bld. Go straight until you see the lake on your right. Go past the lake and turn right into Laurel Dr. Pull into the parking lot and we will be at the picnic shelter.

Questions? George 691 -2559

SUREFIRE WAYS TO GET A GREAT NIGHT'S SLEEP

Are you getting enough sleep? According to an Institute of Medicine study, about 50 million Americans are not. Yet adequate rest is as vital to health and peak performance as exercise and good nutrition. And it can be so e-zzz:

Go to bed and get up at the same times every day – even on days off. Why: You'll help regulate your body's internal clock to get the 7-8 hours sleep most adults require.

Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Try a warm bath, light reading or listening to pleasant music. Fact: Listening to classical or New Age music at bedtime has been shown to help insomnia sufferers fall asleep. Possible reason: The music matches body rhythms and slows the heart rate.

Skip stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine from late afternoon on. And don't use alcohol to induce sleep. As its sedative effect wears off, alcohol can trigger wakefulness. Don't rely on sleeping pills. They can disrupt your sleep/wake cycle if you depend on them too much.

Squeeze in daytime fitness. In one recent study, regular exercisers not only slept almost an hour longer than non-exercisers; they also fell asleep in half the time.

Get help if your sleep has been disturbed often during the past month, or if sleep problems interfere with your ability to function normally during the day.

INFOLINE: for more information about sleep, call the National Sleep Foundation at 1-888-673-7533.

- TopHealth, The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

Events

Mark your calendars!
Visit our online calendar for more
info on events .



Upcoming Events

Aug 16, Thursday

Monthly membership meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). 6:15 for refreshments, 6:30 for meeting.

Sept 20, Thursday

The WNC Brain Tumor Support 6th Annual Brain Tumor Survivor's Picnic will be Thursday, Sept 20 at Lake Tomahawk in Black Mountain! If you appreciate life and are thankful for everyday, join us for an evening of food, fun and relaxation! Bring you family too! Food will be served around 6:30. Bring a cover dish...Drinks, meat, bread, plates are provided by WNC BTS!

Oct 18, Thursday

Monthly membership meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). 6:15 for refreshments, 6:30 for meeting.

Nov 15, Thursday

Monthly membership meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). 6:15 for refreshments, 6:30 for meeting.

Parking at Normal Meeting Place

The best place to park is in the Suntrust bank drive-thru parking directly along the drive of the adjoining the church. Do not park next to the night deposit box! If you park in the back lot of the church, for security reasons, the back door will be locked at 6:30. So, park on the side of the bank!

Thoughts...

“A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.” – Unknown

“Happiness is like a butterfly. The more you chase it, the more it will elude you. But if you turn your attention to other things, it comes softly and sits on your shoulder.” – Unknown

“Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense”. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW...

Men are 20% more likely than women to sneeze in a dusty room

A cup of coffee-flavored yogurt can contain about as much caffeine as a 12-ounce can of cola

Dandruff is not caused by dry scalp – fact is, it's more common with oily scalps

Whispering when you're hoarse is actually worse for your vocal cords and speaking normally

“Rx,” the symbol appearing on prescriptions, means “take,” from the Latin word for recipe.

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

Summer Birthdays

Jan Manske 7/25

Frank Gomez 7/25

Deborah Haynes 7/28

Judy Buckner 7/29

Tammy Hartley 8/10

George Plym Jr. 8/13