

# Cancer patient beating the odds with targeted drug available at Ingalls



Dr. Mark Kozloff and patient, Lorraine Pivarski

## Cancer patients with the most common type of lung cancer, like Lorraine Pivarski of Crete, now have another treatment option.

According to the American Cancer Society, a recent study of patients with locally advanced and metastatic lung cancer showed that those who took Tarceva lived a few months longer than those who had taken a placebo.

The targeted cancer drug known as ertolinib and marketed as Tarceva by Genentech has been shown to help patients live longer.

Tarceva, one of many targeted therapies available through the Ingalls cancer program, has been approved for use in patients with non-small cell lung cancer who have not responded to other treatments. Ingalls is one of the only hospitals in the area that participated in clinical research that helped bring this important cancer therapy to the market.

“New molecular and genetic understanding of the biology of cancerous tumors has led researchers to develop sophisticated drugs that specifically target and destroy cancer cells, which are molecularly different from normal cells,” explained Mark Kozloff, M.D., hematologist/ oncologist on staff at Ingalls.

“Although the survival benefit seems small, it is significant to both patients and their loved ones,” Dr. Kozloff said. For Pivarski, the benefit has been great. An active mother, grandmother and registered nurse, she was diagnosed with advanced non-small cell lung cancer in the summer of 2003.

“I was becoming increasingly breathless with very little activity, and I didn’t know what it was,” she explained.

Pivarski had an echocardiogram which detected an arrhythmia caused by fluid around her heart. A biopsy showed lung cancer located in the upper portion of the right lung and several nearby lymph nodes.

Following chemotherapy and external beam radiation in May of 2004, Pivarski began taking Iressa, another targeted therapy that has been indicated for patients with non-small cell lung cancer. The treatment worked for her for nearly two years, but in May 2006, CT scans showed a growth in her cancer. That’s when Dr. Kozloff recommended Tarceva, a medication taken once a day by mouth.

Despite some side effects, Pivarski has continued working as a registered nurse three days a week. She also enjoys traveling, going to dinner with friends and helping to care for her grandchildren, whom she often takes to school.

“The disease is very difficult to treat in most people,” Dr. Kozloff said. “With the advent of targeted therapies like Tarceva, physicians can now offer patients a new option.”

“I’ve maintained a normal life,” Pivarski said, “and I’m forever grateful to Dr. Kozloff and to Ingalls.” <