

Newport Hospital Connection

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2021

Vanderbilt Rehab Helps COVID Survivor Get Back to Normal

When asked to describe himself, Providence criminal defense attorney Robert Mann is quick to say he is “stubborn.” Nurse practitioner Beverly Casinelli, who treated him at Newport Hospital’s Vanderbilt Rehabilitation Center (VRC), prefers to call him “strong-willed.”

Robert’s never-give-up attitude along with the skilled and compassionate care he received were instrumental in his months-long rehabilitation from COVID-19.

Robert transferred to the VRC—which was recently expanded and is now Lifespan’s primary acute rehab center—after spending nearly a month at Rhode Island Hospital receiving treatment for COVID-19. In critical condition at times, he had spent seven days sedated while on a ventilator.

When he was medically ready to leave Rhode Island Hospital’s COVID-19 unit, he found himself physically and mentally weakened by complications of the disease and his prior diagnosis of Parkinson’s Disease. He was experiencing lapses in short-term memory and other cognitive functioning, challenges with fine motor skills, and difficulty walking on his own without feeling out of breath.

“You’re frustrated because you want to do more than your body will let you do,” says the 72-year-old. “I needed to learn what my limitations were.”

Robert arrived at the VRC with two main goals in mind: prevent needing to move to a long-term care facility and get back to work as an attorney as soon as possible.

“The fact that they didn’t discourage me from going back to work was very important,” he says.



Robert Mann

After ruling out a possible brain infection and adjusting some of his Parkinson’s medications, his care team focused on helping him make slow but steady progress through 15 hours of physical and occupational therapy per week.

Unable to have friends and family visit due to COVID-19 protocols, Robert says he was grateful for the friendly relationships he developed with his doctors, nurses, and therapists. At the end of June, after a four-week stay, he was strong enough to go home. Beverly Casinelli and the physical therapists at the VRC worked with Robert, his stepdaughters and friends to create a plan that would ensure that he would be safe and comfortable living on his own.

Aside from some moderate symptoms that are likely due to his Parkinson’s Disease, Robert says his life is back to normal. And in the middle of July, he met his second goal, going back to work at his law office for the first time since he got sick.

“I’m grateful for my second chance,” Robert says. “Every time I have a bad day, I think about the fact that I could not be having this day.”

Lifesaving Cancer Treatment, Across Two Countries

The daughter of an Army veteran and German mother, Sandra Broomfield had always felt comfortable in the country she considered her second home. But nothing could soften the shock of being diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2019 following a routine mammogram in Stuttgart, Germany, where she and her husband, Charlie, a Navy Commander, were stationed at the time.

“Denial was a big part of my diagnosis—breast cancer was the furthest thing from my mind,” recalls the now 51-year-old mother of two. “I do monthly self-exams and never felt anything. I had no symptoms.”

Doctors in Germany devised a treatment plan that included a lumpectomy – surgical removal of a lump of breast tissue—and chemotherapy, then radiation. Looming, and factored into timing, was relocating to Newport in March 2020.



Charlie and Sandra Broomfield

with Newport Hospital and Lifespan. So by the time she reached Rhode Island, everything was already in place to continue her treatment.

Newport Hospital became Sandra’s home base. And although radiation is not offered here, the hospital’s affiliation with Lifespan Cancer Institute expedited everything. Within 10 days of being back, she had her first radiation treatment at Rhode Island Hospital. By the end of August, she had completed radiation.

“My tests and follow-up scans were done in Newport, close to home. The care was amazing and I was impressed with how well everything was connected—it was seamless how doctors work in both hospitals,” says Sandra. “I felt treated like I was part of their family.”

On November 12, 2020—exactly one year from the day of her diagnosis—Sandra had a mammogram at Newport Hospital that confirmed she was cancer-free.

“Being a military spouse, it can be easy to put off appointments. But no matter what’s going on in the world around us, no one should ever wait to get checked for a medical issue. I just can’t say enough about the expertise that’s available right here in Newport.”

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— Sandra Broomfield, patient

“I had a transition plan to return to the United States in between my two regimens of chemotherapy, but COVID-19 changed everything, and we stayed in Germany until July,” she says.

Sandra had her last chemo treatment on July 7, beginning a three-week window for when radiation had to begin. She and Charlie arrived in Rhode Island on July 9. Behind the scenes, the couple’s military insurance worked with a liaison at the Naval War College who connected Sandra

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