

Third Time Is a Charm

Jersey Shore University Medical Center

Expert care helps a patient fight cancer three times.

During his first year in college, Keith was diagnosed with Hodgkin disease — a cancer of the lymph node cells. The 18-year-old's world was turned upside down. But with the help of his family, Keith found trusted care and treatment with Hackensack Meridian Health. Since that diagnosis 27 years ago, Keith's physicians have been by his side, compassionately treating him through two more cancer diagnoses and helping him win this battle.

Beginning the Battle

Arthur Topilow, M.D., an oncologist with Jersey Shore University Medical Center, treated Keith's Hodgkin disease. "At the time of diagnosis, I was scared, but I knew I was in good hands," recalls Keith. "Initially, I met with experts from New York. They confirmed Dr. Topilow was one of the best and I was fortunate to have him available locally."

After six months of intensive chemotherapy and radiation, Keith was deemed to be healthy again. "There are cancer treatments that have been proven to work, but we must follow the protocols for them to be successful," explains Dr. Topilow. "With encouragement from Keith's family and our staff, he followed these protocols and the signs of Hodgkin disease disappeared and have never returned. We helped him and continue to help others like him get through these difficult times."

A Continued Fight

Keith's life continued as normal. He graduated from college, started working, got married and eventually had two children. But 20 years after his original diagnosis, his life was interrupted by cancer once again. At a routine appointment for ongoing thyroid issues, Keith's endocrinologist found a cancerous mass on Keith's thyroid — a common secondary cancer in people who had radiation early in life.

Keith sought the trusted advice of Dr. Topilow, who connected Keith to **Alexander Shifrin, M.D., FACS, FACE, ECNU**, an endocrine surgeon at Jersey Shore whose expertise is in thyroid surgery. Dr. Shifrin successfully removed Keith's thyroid in a same-day, minimally invasive outpatient procedure.

"Keith had a number of suspicious growths on his thyroid, which turned out to be cancer," explains Dr. Shifrin. "By taking an aggressive approach to treatment, we could ensure cancer couldn't spread."

Every six months, Keith had blood work and ultrasound testing to monitor for signs of cancer. In 2014, an ultrasound showed that Keith had a mass on his parotid gland, one of the salivary glands.

Keith was referred to **Sean Houston, M.D.**, an otolaryngologist at Jersey Shore. Dr. Houston surgically removed the malignant tumor in the gland. Because the operation was so successful, no other treatment was needed. Keith had successfully beaten cancer a third time.

A New Life

Today, Keith works closely with Dr. Topilow on cancer prevention and monitoring. He recently had a chest CT scan of the area where his initial cancer was found, and Dr. Topilow has been watching to make sure no other signs of cancer appear.

Keith uses his free time to focus on his family. He also volunteers with the charitable organization Ocean of Love, which supports children in Ocean County going through cancer.

“Although I’ve beaten cancer, you never really walk away from it. It’s like a second shadow,” explains Keith. “My goal is to use my experience to inspire other children. They need to know that

cancer can be beat. Early diagnosis, aggressive treatment and consistent follow-up is so important.”

He continues, “I essentially met Dr. Topilow as a child and he is still with me. It was his continued commitment to me over the last 30 years that kept me ahead of these cancers, and his guidance for early diagnosis and intervention was key. This man saved my life.”



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Keith, pictured with his wife, Jen, enjoys living on the water and boating.

More Stories of Hope



Keith’s incredible journey is one of many Hackensack Meridian Health success stories. Meet more patients who have beaten cancer and hear their stories in their own words by visiting HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Cancer.