

HEALTH



STAFF PHOTOS: BOB BIELK

Jeff Krauszer, shown with his 3-year-old son, Kurt, in their Mantoloking home, had a cancerous brain tumor removed last year and is taking part in a chemotherapy clinical trial at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City.

Waging a war

Local man relies on faith, science to battle brain cancer

By **SUSAN BLOOM**
CORRESPONDENT

Jeff Krauszer's 3-year-old son, Kurt, crawls around happily on the floor of their sunny Mantoloking living room while Krauszer looks on proudly. Family pictures and mementos grace the walls of their picturesque lagoon-side home, and grown daughter Tara, 22, floats in to join the fun.

It's a seemingly peaceful and idyllic existence, though a trained eye might notice the telltale signs of a personal war being waged, such as the gray rubber bracelet around Krauszer's wrist bearing the words "Hope. Faith. Courage." and a curious lineup of medications on the kitchen counter, the promising key to his future following a devastating diagnosis nearly one year ago of brain cancer.

Krauszer unknowingly began the fight of his life last May, when a series of random events caused him concern. Given his 25 years of heavy-lifting experience as a carpenter, the rugged 49-year-old recalled thinking it odd when he struggled to move some furniture in his house one day. He chalked it up to arthritis.

He also began "smelling weird smells," which he attributed to mustiness in the buildings he was working in. Then came excruciating headaches every day for a week. On Memorial Day, Krauszer told his wife it was time to go to the clinic. "Something's definitely wrong," he said.

Indeed it was. A CAT scan revealed a golf-ball-sized mass behind his right eye; his doctor admitted him to Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune on the spot. The tumor was successfully removed during a three-hour surgery in early June, but subsequent tests and an analysis of his previous symptoms confirmed a glioblastoma, a particularly aggressive form of brain cancer similar to the one that felled the late Sen. Ted Kennedy.



Krauszer, who believes in keeping his attitude positive, wears wristbands from the Lance Armstrong Foundation and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

For more information on Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, call 212-639-2000 or visit www.mskcc.org. To share your experience or for questions, Jeff Krauszer can be reached at 732-295-2352.

According to the Livestrong organization, glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) originates in the brain and may invade the spinal cord. It's considered the most difficult brain cancer to treat and has a poor prognosis, with statistics showing a 16 percent survival rate two years after diagnosis and only 7 percent after three.

Krauszer, who has no history of cancer in his family, recalled he and 44-year-old wife, Nancy, falling to the floor in tears when a doctor gave him "one to two years to live, with more operations," he said.

But Krauszer immediately picked himself up and decided, "I'm not going anywhere."

A clinical trial

Following a week spent researching his condition and making calls, a determined Krauszer was approved as the 35th of 40 patients in a unique clinical trial at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. The purpose of the trial is to "test the safety of a new combination of treatment for glioblastoma."

This treatment included 30 minutes of pinpoint radiation every other day for the first two weeks, during which Krauszer wore a special face mask and was anchored to a table to prevent him from moving. Four weeks later, he began a chemo regimen involving the drugs Avastin, administered to him through a 20-minute drip process every 14 days, and Temedar, which he takes in pill form for five days straight every 23 days.

Dr. Thomas Kaley, a neuro-oncologist who treats Krauszer at the Brain Tumor Center at Memorial Sloan-Kettering, described the design of the clinical trial in which Krauszer is enrolled.

"It basically takes standard treatment and adds something extra to it," he said. "In general, clinical trials try to improve upon standard therapies. We design them based upon

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PEOPLE'S PHARMACY

By
Joe Graedon &
Teresa Graedon



Heartburn drug leads to deficiencies

Q. I was on Prilosec for nearly two years to combat persistent heartburn. When my fingernails started to fall apart, and my feet and legs started getting numb, I did a bit of homework and discovered that this drug greatly inhibits the absorption of vitamin B-12.

I started to wean myself off it. That was rather unpleasant because prolonged use of proton pump inhibitors makes your gastric acid glands work overtime to compensate. I took lots of Tums and DGL (deglycyrrhizinated licorice) to stave off the worst of the acid blowback. It took nearly six weeks, but my stomach got back to normal.

I discovered that sweets, especially soda or anything with high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), were the main cause of my misery, so I cut them completely out of my diet. I ate smaller meals and kept taking my vitamin B-12 supplements.

The strange tingling in my feet eventually went away after I added magnesium to my nightly supplements. Now I rarely have heartburn that I can't handle with Tums. My fingernails, although not perfect, are much better.

Other sufferers might consider eliminating carbonated beverages and foods sweetened with HFCS from their diets to see if that helps alleviate their heartburn.

A. Thanks for sharing your experience. Other readers have told us that a low-carb diet can sometimes alleviate heartburn. Long-term use of acid-suppressing drugs may reduce vitamin B-12 levels. That can lead to nerve pain such as tingling or numbness.

The Food and Drug Administration has issued a warning about low magnesium levels linked to powerful acid-suppressing drugs such as esomeprazole (Nexium), lansoprazole (Prevacid), omeprazole (Prilosec) and pantoprazole (Protonix). Using such drugs for more than a year could lead to dangerously low levels of magnesium that a supplement cannot reverse.

Q. I read that the lemon wedges put in drinking water in restaurants often are contaminated with germs. Does a slice of lime also contain bacteria? Is it safe to drop a slice of lime in a bottle of Corona beer?

A. A study of lemon slices in restaurants found that two-thirds were contaminated (Journal of Environmental Health, December 2007). It is unlikely that limes are handled differently in a restaurant kitchen, so we suspect that lime wedges also might carry bacteria.



Q. We recently enjoyed several days with friends at their vacation condo. Now I fear we have bedbugs. Could these critters have traveled home with us in our luggage? How can we verify our suspicions?

A. Bedbugs can indeed hitch a ride in luggage. A visual examination by an expert can cost up to \$200. Trained dogs are very good at detecting bedbugs but may cost \$300 to \$600 for an inspection.

An inexpensive bedbug detector can be constructed at home for less than \$40. You will need some dry ice, a cooler jug to hold it and a plastic pan or dish to catch the bedbugs. Go to Peoples Pharmacy.com and search bedbugs to see the detector in action along with ways to avoid bedbugs when you travel.

Contact the Graedons via their website, www.PeoplesPharmacy.com.

Health tip: If your child has cystic fibrosis

By **DIANA KOHNLE**
HEALTHDAY

Children with cystic fibrosis may have different dietary needs than other children.

The Nemours Foundations says parents should make sure that children with cystic fibrosis get plenty of:

- Calcium for bone health, via dairy products and calcium-fortified foods and drinks.
- Essential fatty acids that may play a role in lung function, via

walnuts, salmon and flax seeds. Supplements are OK if your pediatrician approves.

- Vitamins A, D, E and K — the fat-soluble vitamins — via supplements to help boost the immune system.
- Iron to prevent anemia, via meats and dark green veggies.
- Salt, to counteract salt loss through sweat.
- Zinc, to boost the immune system and promote healing, via eggs, meat and seafood.

