

Web site helped him stay alive

By LIBBY KEELING / Evansville, Indiana Courier & Press
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Curiosity doesn't do much for feline health, but Bil Musgrave's inquisitive nature helped save his life.

Four years ago, the Boonville, Ind., resident was diagnosed with bile duct cancer and given only a few months to live. His doctors advised him not to search the Internet for information that might give him false hope, prescribed pain medication and sent him home to die.

He ignored their advice and - on the 85th Web site he visited - found a Mayo Clinic news release describing liver transplant as a potential treatment.

Now, more than three years after his transplant, Musgrave remains cancer free and has created a Web site of his own. He designed the site to honor doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., pay tribute to those who lost their lives to bile duct cancer and give hope to others battling the disease.

"If there's one piece of the puzzle that's missing in your life after going through something like this, it's how would you ever start to repay everybody," Musgrave said. "I still wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the strong support of my wife and family and friends."

Musgrave's Web site, www.bileductcancer.org, is dedicated to Mayo Drs. Gregory Gores and Charles Rosen, part of a team that has successfully used a regimen of radiation and chemotherapy before liver transplants to treat bile duct cancer.

Cholangiocarcinoma, bile duct cancer, is rare and occurs when a malignancy grows in the ducts that transport bile from the liver to the small intestine. The Mayo Clinic treats 100 to 200 new bile duct cancer patients annually and is one of a few facilities that offer liver transplantation as treatment.

"They said I was the 16th person in the world to make it through that disease," Musgrave recalled. At the time of his transplant, he said, the Mayo Clinic was the only medical facility in the world authorized to offer transplant as treatment.

While at the clinic, Musgrave met others who found hope in the possibility of a transplant but did not meet the eligibility requirements.

"You have to understand, the majority of cases and the majority seen at Mayo with the same disease, they were up there because they checked out the options, did the same thing I did, but the outcome wasn't the same." Still, he advises people receiving bleak diagnoses to explore their options, while emphasizing there are no guarantees.

Musgrave's pretransplant therapy included radiation beads and months of chemo. The techniques were not new, he said. The treatment simply combined existing therapies with transplant.

"I'm lucky to be here. I feel very fortunate," he said. "Some days are better than others. After you've been through all that, every day's a good day."