

# Johns Hopkins Bayview

Health and Wellness News

## When Surgery Gives Back the Zest for Life

(page 4)

Betty Giguere's brightly colored hats symbolize her successful brain surgery and her return to a "zest for life."



### Tipping the Scales in Their Favor

(page 7)



### Breast Angiosarcoma

(page 12)



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# When Surgery Gives Back the Zest for Life

**H**eadaches. Dizziness. Blurred vision. Betty Giguere, 61, of Westminster, a retired systems administrator, attributed these symptoms to the need for new glasses and made an appointment with her ophthalmologist. To her amazement, a tumor the size of a large orange was found to be pressing on her optic nerve and other parts of her brain.

Giguere was diagnosed with meningioma, a very slow-growing, usually benign type of tumor. While meningioma is very common in the brain, Giguere's tumor was located at the skull base and presented a unique set of challenges.

"Her tumor was pushing on the frontal lobe," explains Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon Alessandro Olivi, M.D. "This kind of tumor grows very slowly—hers had probably been there for decades—and the brain adapts. But, at a certain point, the brain won't take it any more and the brain itself begins to swell. That reaction can cause dysfunction of the brain, which in turn, causes symptoms to appear."

In fact, numerous symptoms had presented themselves in Giguere over the past year, demonstrating that even a benign tumor can slowly but dramatically change the personality. "Giguere had significant cognitive deterioration characterized by apathy," Dr. Olivi says. "She had become totally withdrawn and emotionally flat, not caring about much of anything."

"I am normally a go-getter with a strong work ethic," Giguere says. "When I retired from my job, I was asked to come back as a consultant and

work from home. After a while, I started noticing that I didn't have the drive any more. I didn't care if I got the job done or not. I would rather do jigsaw puzzles.

Eventually, they let me go and it was fine with me. I went steadily downhill from there. I gained a lot of weight and just wanted to sleep much of the day."

Dr. Olivi saw Giguere on a Monday and scheduled her surgery for the following Thursday. Given the multitude of symptoms, he opted for complete removal of the tumor.

Armed with sophisticated methods and his own advanced knowledge and experience with

skull base tumors, Dr. Olivi attacked the tumor at its roots, the part that was getting the most blood supply.

"If the blood supply to the tumor can be cut down early in surgery, the procedure is less fraught with complications," he says. "In order to achieve the best outcome, it is important that complicated cases be treated at a medical center such as Johns Hopkins Bayview, where we developed techniques that are safe and effective for removing these challenging tumors."

The success of Giguere's six-hour operation was evident almost immediately, as she began to experience a return of her emotions. A telephone conversation with her niece while still in the recovery room evoked tears of joy. "I just welled up," she recalls. "God was letting me know right then that things were going to be fine!"

In a matter of about two months, Giguere's cognitive function showed dramatic improvement. "She struck me as one of the most significant examples of a return to a normal and joyful personality," Dr. Olivi says.

In the year since her surgery, Giguere has lost 63 pounds; she has rejoined the bell choir at her church and is excited about life again. Her husband says, "I'm happy to have my wife back!"

—Martie Callaghan

## Symptoms Are Not Always Physical

Physical symptoms, such as headaches, blurred vision and dizziness, can indicate a variety of conditions, including the presence of a brain tumor. Yet other, more subtle symptoms that affect emotions and cognition also are present at the time of diagnosis in an estimated 50 to 80 percent of brain tumor patients. Symptoms are largely dependent on the size, location and type of tumor.

**Emotional symptoms include apathy, depression and even irritability. Cognitive symptoms include difficulties with:**

- Concentrating and paying attention
- Multi-tasking
- Reading and understanding information
- Solving problems
- Planning and organizing
- Reasoning

Changes in personality and behavior should always be investigated. The advanced diagnostic and treatment techniques at Johns Hopkins Bayview provide excellent outcomes in even the most challenging cases.

For more information about neurosurgery at  
Johns Hopkins Bayview, call 410-550-0465.



## Real-Time CT Imaging Enhances Surgical Capabilities

**T**his winter, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center will become the second hospital in the United States to implement a dual-room intraoperative CT (iCT), a new imaging technology that will do for surgery what the GPS did for driving around the city.

Real-time images will help surgeons verify the distance between tumors and vital structures during surgery and will help to verify the success of the operation



after surgery. The equipment will run on rails on the floor in between two adjacent operating rooms, eliminating the need to move the patient out of the OR and into the radiology department.

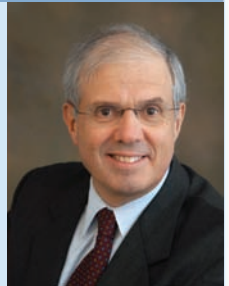
“Intraoperative CT will give us a significant edge with regard to the effectiveness and safety of what we are doing in the OR, while bringing the versatility to serve more than one surgical specialty,” says Dr. Olivi.

In spinal and orthopedic applications, iCT will be used to check the placement of instrumentation and screws. Neurosurgical applications include tumor resection and vascular surgery.

“The iCT will be useful when we place catheters into ventricles to verify their position,” Dr. Olivi says, “or to verify that bleeding from the brain has been completely removed before we take the patient away

from the OR. Not only do we have expert neurosurgeons and state-of-the-art-equipped operating rooms, but also a highly specialized

**Alessandro Olivi, M.D.**  
*Chair of neurosurgery*



neuroscience critical care unit (one of only a few in the state) to take care of our most complex cases postoperatively. This trio of excellent features makes places like Johns Hopkins Bayview the place to be treated for challenging neurosurgical conditions.”