

Mayo Clinic News Network

Title: From Marine to Miracle Cancer Survivor / Date: August 2015

Intro: Integrated care. A multidisciplinary approach. These are words often heard when talking about the way Mayo Clinic seamlessly incorporates many medical specialties to diagnose and treat patients. A young man from Wisconsin offers up a couple more – lifesaving teamwork. Here’s Dennis Douda for the Mayo Clinic News Network.

Video

Audio (file #2048)

Total running time [5:26]	/// NATS VIDEO
Josh Russell speaking	“She’s a wildfire, but she’s a good horse.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Josh Russell is saddling up for a trail ride. It’s one of his favorite things to do.
Josh Russell speaking	“Fishing, hunting, anything outdoorsy I’ve always enjoyed. It kind of just got put on hold. Still wanted to do them, but just wasn’t able to. Pretty much my whole life has been put on hold for the last four years, four-and-a-half years.
Dennis Douda speaking	That includes wedding plans with his best friend and fiancée Ashley.
Josh Russell speaking	“Yeah, we’ve been engaged since 2011.”
//// NATS doctor greets patient	“Hi Mr. Russell, I’m Dr. Alexander. I’ll be helping out here. Hi.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Cancer often gets in the way of life’s best laid plans. But, rarely in such a shocking way as it did for Josh.
C.G. Josh Russell Cancer Survivor	“My whole life had always been healthy as could be, never went to the doctor for nothing and all through the Marine Corps, never went to sick call or nothin’.”
Dennis Douda speaking	In 2011 this once 245 pound, rough-tough honorably discharged Marine noticed a small bump on his stomach. He thought it was a hernia. So did his local doctor, who scheduled an operation to repair it.
Josh Russell speaking	“Well, when I come in for pre-op, they said the blood work had come back and it wasn’t a hernia. And then all the sudden, I got cancer and it’s killing me.”
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“Mr. Russell really had a massive amount of tumors. So all of the major blood vessels in his body that go to all of his major organs and many of those organs are encompassed by tumor.

	He really had more tumor than normal tissue in his abdomen.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Joss was diagnosed with testicular cancer, which is generally highly treatable.
C.G. Bradley Leibovich, M.D. Mayo Clinic Chair of Urology	“In fact, testicular cancer is one of the first cancers that we were reliably able to cure with chemotherapy. There is one component of testicular cancer called teratoma, which is present in some patients and does not respond to chemotherapy.”
Josh Russell speaking	“Really didn’t feel it was going to work, but they said they would try it and they were giving me six months. So it was pretty much as bad as it comes.”
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“He was told by several other centers that there was really no option and that he should go on hospice.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Never one to give up the fight, Josh and his family turned to Mayo Clinic. His care would be coordinated by urologic oncology surgeon, Brad Leibovich.
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“So we met first thing in the morning and I actually let him go while I called a whole bunch of friends in various surgical disciplines.”
Dr. Thomas Bower speaking	“You know, Brad called me up, asked us to take a look at the scans.”
C.G. James Lynch, M.D. Mayo Clinic Anesthesiology	“And whether it’s, you know, 10:00 in the morning or 10:00 at night, if you need help or need to talk to somebody, you know, we can get a hold of them.”
Dr. Jan Kasperbauer speaking	“Again, I think that’s where we excel, you know, when you have the multiple team input.”
C.G. Thomas Bower, M.D. / Chair of Vascular & Endovascular Surgery	“And the ability to put together a multidisciplinary team of surgeons in relatively short order, who are willing to do things that perhaps other places can’t, I think, is what’s been one of the stamps that, in the surgical world here at Mayo, has been great.”
C.G. Dennis Wigle, M.D., Ph.D. Chair of Thoracic Surgery	“But we know for this disease that it does have an impact, and you can get a win. You can get a cure if you’re very aggressive like that.”
Josh Russell speaking	“After talking to them, it felt like I had a chance.”
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“With Mr. Russell’s case, we were initially most concerned about his ability to continue to breathe.”

Dennis Douda speaking	For this reason the team decided that the first areas to tackle were the neck and center of the chest. Oto-rhino-laryngologist Dr. Jan Kasperbauer worked with vascular and thoracic surgeons to remove the tumors crushing the trachea and esophagus. As with every step of his treatment, Josh was made fully aware of the risks and chose to press on.
C.G. Jan Kasperbauer, M.D. Mayo Clinic Otorhinolaryngology (ENT)	“The recurrent laryngeal nerves and the vagus nerves pass through here, and they are important in both swallowing and speech and breathing.”
Dr. Thomas Bower speaking	“It's meticulous, tedious, and you have to be in the mindset that it's just going to take time.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Dr. Thomas Bower is the Chair of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery.
Dr. Thomas Bower speaking	“You know, some of these were all day long affairs.”
Dennis Douda speaking	Over a 4 year span, 9 multidisciplinary operations would be required, some as long as 16 hours. The teratoma tumor had to be peeled away from virtually every structure critical for life. Dr. Leibovich says, when Josh first arrived at Mayo Clinic, his cancer threatened every major artery, vein, and organ from his neck to his pelvis.
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“And now I think, you know, there's not much question that he will be cured of this.”
/// NATS horseback riding	/// NATS horseback riding
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“It is an absolutely amazing thing.”
Dennis Douda speaking	So amazing that Josh and Ashley are talking about having children and are once again able to make plans for the future.
Ashley Travis speaking	“Oh, probably buying a farm, getting married and all sorts of stuff, all thanks to Mayo and what they did for us.”
Josh Russell speaking	“They're miracle workers. That's, that's for sure.”
Dr. Dennis Wigle speaking	“This is a life that would not have happened if we were not able to do all of this. So, that's a very, very rewarding thing.”
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“And it had to be at least a couple hundred different people that - that got him to where he is.”
Dr. Jan Kasperbauer speaking	“Like our pathology colleagues.”
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“ICU staff. How many nurses and techs?”

Dr. Thomas Bower speaking	“Great anesthesiologists and great critical care people.”
Dr. Bradley Leibovich speaking	“It’s the radiologists who are providing us with the images we need. The list goes on and on of people that are part of this.”
Josh Russell speaking	“It’s a great team that I’ve got taking care of me, so, I wouldn’t want anybody else.”
Dennis Douda speaking	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Dennis Douda.

Anchor tag: Josh has one more surgery planned for this summer, after which it’s hoped he will be cancer-free.

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