

Grace Hart & Family — Moving Forward

Contributing to and Benefiting from Clinical Research



*Grace Hart getting the news from Teresa Olea, RN,
"You are on Avastin!"*

About three years ago, Grace Hart had advanced colon cancer. The cancer had metastasized and invaded the chest. Her doctors said her cancer was not curable and she was given a grave, short-term prognosis. Her son, who had successfully battled Hodgkin's disease at Pacific Shores Medical Group several years before, brought her to Dr. Tchekmedyian for an opinion.

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During the meeting, Dr. Tchekmedyian explained that Pacific Shores, as a member of the UCLA Affiliated Translational Research Network, was conducting a clinical trial using an angiogenesis inhibitor, Avastin™, an intravenous medication that may prevent cancer cells from growing by blocking the growth of new blood vessels.

Dr. Tchekmedyian explained the trial was a double-blind study, which meant that Mrs. Hart would have a 50% chance of being treated either with Avastin in conjunction with a standard chemotherapy program or a placebo in conjunction with a standard chemotherapy program. Neither Mrs. Hart nor the doctors would know, for two years, if she was receiving the Avastin™ or the placebo until the study concluded.

After hearing all of the details of the clinical trial, as well as learning about standard treatment options, Mrs. Hart chose to participate in the clinical trial.

The treatment worked, she tolerated it well, and her condition improved rapidly. She experienced a blood clot as result of her treatment, but was quickly prescribed blood thinners, which prevented any further complications.

Overall, Mrs. Hart continued to improve. She was feeling much better, had more energy, and was soon resuming the day-to-day activities she enjoyed before her diagnosis of cancer.

Her cancer stopped spreading. Dr. Tchekmedyian gave her the good news in September of 2001. At the end of 2003, Mrs. Hart's treatment was unblinded, which revealed she was receiving the drug Avastin™ together with her chemotherapy.

She then volunteered for the next phase of the trial, which studied the long-term effects of Avastin™. Once the FDA approved the drug early in 2004, she went on it as standard treatment. Mrs. Hart's participation in the study may not only have helped her, but may also help countless others now that the drug has been approved.

"Mrs. Hart's participation in the clinical trial of Avastin™ and chemotherapy for metastatic colon cancer represents the best contributions that patients and doctors can make to advance cancer treatments," says Dr. Tchekmedyian. "She has had a favorable progress, and three years later she is continuing to enjoy her life with no signs of cancer progression."

"There are many new cancer drugs in clinical testing; these drugs have the potential to help many cancer patients. However a bottleneck is evolving because of the inability to quickly move from the results available from basic research to the treatment of patients in the clinic. Human testing is a difficult and long process. However, it is through the commitment and effort of dedicated and experienced clinical investigators and patient volunteers that we will accelerate our progress and win the fight on cancer," Dr. Tchekmedyian said.

"We thank patients like Mrs. Hart who participate in these trials, and the research coordinators and nurses who work so hard every day to move this process forward. Pacific Shores Medical Group will continue to build on these results and move forward, as that is clearly our passion and our mission."



*Three generations of the Hart Family, (left) granddaughter Alex,
daughter Vicki, and son Bill with Grace*