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# Tampa General Hospital Bridges the Gap to Complex Cancer Care

*Steve Barnes and Dr. Tapan Padhya greeting a guest at Tampa General Hospital's recent community event in Jupiter.*

***When Palm Beach County and Treasure Coast residents need specialized cancer treatments, they now enjoy a seamless connection to the TGH Cancer Institute.***

Palm Beach Gardens resident Arthur "Steve" Barnes has been battling various types of skin cancer since 1981. His 42-year journey has taken him to dermatologists, radiation oncologists

and medical oncologists, and last year, it took him to Tampa General Hospital (TGH).

“Most of my cancer has been pretty easy to treat – basal cell carcinoma and even squamous cell. But about three or four years ago, it started to get aggressive. It got complex,” Barnes explained. “I’ve been so blessed to have doctors who cooperate with or work at TGH.”

Barnes’ local dermatologist and surgeon referred him to Dr. Abraham Schwarzberg, a Palm Beach County medical oncologist who serves as chief of the TGH Cancer Institute, executive vice president of Network Development, and vice president of Clinical and Translational Research.

“There are a lot of things about TGH that are unique and important, as well as hard to appreciate until you need a certain level of care,” said Schwarzberg. “There are wonderful physicians and pieces of the cancer treatment puzzle in Palm Beach County, but the lack of a unified, academic backbone limits access to translational research, clinical work and new drug development. Our relationship with TGH and the University of South Florida has been invaluable for our patients.”

Dr. Schwarzberg referred Barnes to Dr. Tapan Padhya, chief of the TGH Ear, Nose & Throat Institute, and professor and chairman for the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at USF Health Morsani College of Medicine. Padhya performed a surgical intervention on Barnes in Tampa within one month of first seeing him.

“Dr. Padhya saved all the nerves in my face and removed all the cancer because he and Dr. Schwarzberg were so on top of everything,” Barnes said. “I was worried I was going to come out looking like Frankenstein, so it’s really amazing I look as much like Brad Pitt as I do now.”

East Coast patients who need a transfer to TGH enjoy a seamless transition to Tampa through the hospital’s Health

Ambassador Program, which helps schedule appointments, submit paperwork, arrange hotel and travel accommodations, and coordinate follow-up care back home.

“This is the experience that we offer our patients on the East Coast of Florida,” explained Padhya. “The home team of doctors in Palm Beach County establishes the initial trust with the patient and provides the ongoing care 364 days of the year, and then I come in for the surgical event. But it’s a continuum of care. The TGH network has flourished and bridged the gap across the state.”

Barnes credits his successful outcome to the entire medical team, but also, his family. His wife, daughter and son participated in his telehealth visits and encouraged him throughout the process.

“My family and prayer warriors pushed me to keep going when it got discouraging. My wife hugged me when I needed it during the battles with chemo and radiation. They prayed for me and for the doctors to do a good job,” said Barnes. “And I can’t say enough about how wonderful the medical staff was. They treated me like I was their grandfather or father. There’s something that Theodore Roosevelt once said that could be a theme for this hospital: ‘No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.’ TGH really cared about my case.”

Patients like Barnes now have access to the complex care they need in the environment where they need it. “The continuity and integration is so valuable because we don’t have that in our backyard,” Schwarzberg added. “But now we have it as an extension, and patients can come back home to heal.”

*For more information, please visit [TGH.org/ThePalmBeaches](https://www.tgh.org/ThePalmBeaches) or call (561) 739-4TGH.*

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