



Carol's story

“I may have cancer, but I am going to live for today.”

Mercyhealth Cancer Center patient Carol Brown

In the spring of 2017, Carol was not feeling well. She had been having stomachaches and a cough that wouldn't go away. She felt terrible pain on her right side. Unwilling to endure the pain any longer, she visited a Mercyhealth doctor. Imaging tests showed a tumor on her lung and lesions on her liver. Her doctor broke the news that she had cancer. As a former American Cancer Society employee, Carol had worked with cancer patients for many years. She knew very well what the diagnosis meant, but still it was hard to process. Days later, Carol had more imaging tests. Mercyhealth medical oncologist, Dr. Emily Robinson, diagnosed stage 4 lung cancer that had metastasized to her liver. During this time, Carol also experienced some vision loss and was having trouble walking. An imaging test found a brain tumor, and Dr. Christopher Sturm, neurosurgeon at Mercyhealth, removed the tumor. Mercyhealth radiation oncologist, Dr. Kevin Kozak, followed up with radiation therapy to the brain. Carol also began a novel oral medication daily, under the guidance of Dr. Robinson. This medication, an ALK-inhibitor, targets a specific mutation found in her tumor cells and blocks their ability to grow. By autumn, Carol could walk, drive, talk and had minimal memory loss. She felt so good that she planned a trip to Washington, DC, for Thanksgiving. Her scans showed significant improvement, indicating a near complete response to treatment. “I realize how important life is, being with family and friends, and doing things with my grandchildren,” Carol said. “There is hope; it may not be the hope you are looking for, but there is always hope.” She continues to receive exceptional care at Mercyhealth Cancer Center in Janesville.