

Working Together

Jersey Shore University Medical Center *It takes a team to provide expert endocrinology care.*

Sixty-two-year-old Jim Cantelmo always prided himself on the fact that he'd never needed surgery. All of that changed after a regular checkup led to a diagnosis of thyroid cancer.

In 2013, the Monmouth Beach resident visited **Marek Mrzyglocki, M.D.**, a cardiologist at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and part of **Meridian CardioVascular Network**, for a routine checkup on a thoracic aneurysm. Although everything appeared well with his heart, a CT (computed tomography) scan showed some shadowing up near his throat, so Dr. Mrzyglocki referred Jim to **Alexander Shifrin, M.D.**, an endocrine surgeon at Jersey Shore.

Taking a Team Approach

After reviewing Jim's CT scan, Dr. Shifrin determined that Jim needed to be seen immediately. During the visit that week, an ultrasound showed that Jim had eight nodules on his thyroid.

"Dr. Shifrin showed me the images and explained exactly what I was looking at on the computer screen," Jim says. "He really took the time to make sure that I understood everything." Dr. Shifrin explained that because Jim's large thyroid gland extended into his chest cavity with multiple nodules, the best approach was to remove the thyroid and send the tissues to pathology to find out whether the nodules were cancerous.

"It was a complex procedure because of the large size of the thyroid," Dr. Shifrin says. "Normally, the thyroid is in the neck, but his was so big that it was growing into his chest. I was able to complete the surgery through the neck incision without splitting his chest bone." The pathology results showed that some of the nodules were cancerous. He was diagnosed with multifocal papillary thyroid carcinoma, the most common form of thyroid cancer.

"I was shocked," Jim says. "I had absolutely no symptoms."

Dr. Shifrin referred Jim to **Cristina Ciorlian, M.D., FACE**, an endocrinologist at Jersey Shore. "Dr. Ciorlian picked up right where Dr. Shifrin left off," Jim says.

"After surgery, he started thyroid hormone suppression therapy to replace the essential function of the thyroid gland and to prevent any remaining thyroid cells from growing," Dr. Ciorlian says. Next, Jim received a medication called Thyrogen, in preparation for the following step, radioiodine ablation treatment. "Without Thyrogen we would have to temporarily stop hormone replacement therapy, which would cause the patient to become hypothyroid," Dr. Ciorlian says. As a result, they'd experience symptoms such as weight gain, fatigue, decreased heart rate, depression, and more.

Dr. Ciorlian coordinated with the Nuclear Medicine Department at Jersey Shore to prescribe radioiodine ablation treatment, which involves swallowing a capsule of radioiodine to eliminate any microscopic thyroid cancer cells that may still be present.

Care Where You Need It

Several months later, a whole body scan showed no evidence of thyroid cancer. "We provide lifelong surveillance, monitoring his thyroid-stimulating hormone and thyroid hormone levels, perform periodic neck ultrasound imaging, and adjust medications as needed to prevent and detect any recurrence of thyroid cancer," Dr. Ciorlian says. She also periodically monitors levels of thyroglobulin, a protein made by thyroid cells, which can indicate whether any thyroid cancer cells are present.

Jim, a husband and father of three, is grateful for the support of his family and for the care he received at Jersey Shore. "I was thoroughly impressed by everyone at Meridian. It's been awesome to be able to handle everything right near my home."

Monmouth Beach resident Jim Cantelmo enjoys boating and living in a beach community.



Alexander Shifrin, M.D.
Board certified in
General Surgery
Neptune
1-800-560-9990



Cristina Ciorlian, M.D.
Board certified
in Endocrinology,
Diabetes, and
Metabolism
Neptune and
Jackson
1-800-560-9990

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