

## **Tumor removed, life embraced: SCSU instructor's survival strengthens outlook – St. Cloud Times**

When he was identified with Marfan syndrome at age Fifteen, Kristian Twombly knew he'd in the long run need heart surgical treatment.

The genetic deficiency that causes him to have elongated fingers and limbs in addition invoked his heart valves to flap loosely rather than close correctly. He put off surgical treatment till his mid-30s, and in August 2009 the St. Cloud State Academy music professor had mechanical valves set up in open heart surgical treatment.

That set one trouble that Twombly had carried with him from his youth. However he went on to have migraine head pains that he remembered first facing in his Tenth-grade English class.

Admittedly not a adherent of visiting the health care provider, Twombly suffered through the head pains with ibuprofen and aspirin. Then it wasn't just the head pains and the blurred vision that came with every single one episode.

"Since heart surgical treatment, I observed that I would have a migraine head pain, and while that visual thing was taking place, my right foot would go numb," he said. "Unlike pins-and-needles numb. I can move it, however I just couldn't feel it."

He first thought it was one of lots of odd consequences he had been facing after coming off the heart/lung machine. His heart condition precluded him from taking the drug routinely prescribed for migraines, so his health care provider selected to rule out different reasons behind the head pains before turning to a diverse cure.

That resulted in an MRI in February — "Just a routine brain MRI," he recalls.

After, he was waiting in the foyer at the Center for Diagnostic Imaging, waiting for the packet of pictures that he'd recover to his health care provider. After an uncommonly long wait, a nurse asked him to return and see the health care provider. He recalls undoubtedly what took place next and what the health care provider said.

"Well, it's been there for about Two decades we think, and it's sitting right on top of the head. And we've taken the liberation of calling a neurosurgeon and setting an appointment with a neurosurgeon. We'll just take you up right now. Have you eaten whatever thing this day?"

Just Eighteen months after open heart surgical treatment, Twombly once more was facing a possibly life-changing practice. He had a baseball-sized brain tumor that had been evolving in his head since his grade-school days. St. Cloud neurosurgeon Dr. Gregory Sherr taken out the tumor in March, and Twombly has emerged with little, if any, lasting effects of the surgical treatment.

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The heart surgical treatment invoked him to reassess what was vital in life, he said. He had been disinclined to take out a loan to purchase an automobile or maybe a home as he thought the Marfan syndrome would murder him before he can repay those loans. The heart surgical treatment made him grow up little, he acknowledges. The brain surgical treatment Eighteen months later only acknowledged those senses.

“In a lot of ways, it was equally life-replacing. My girl friend has 3 youngsters. We went through Thanksgiving and Xmas last year together. However it was quite vital to me that we, that WE, cook Thanksgiving and that WE have Xmas together,” he said. “My obligation to family and to life in common and to enhancing myself and to being a positive effect on the planet is, if not redoubled, positively is a massive main concern to me.”

Vital stage

Sherr got the call from a radiologist he knows who works downstairs in the building where Sherr works.

You won't believe it, Sherr was told. That chap is walking around with a baseball-sized tumor in his head. Could I send him right up?

“My starting influence once I saw the pictures was that that was a slow-evolving lesion, Two decades perhaps,” Sherr said in an email conversation.

Twombly's brain had dealt with the lesion long enough and now the evolution was “pissing his brain off,” Sherr said. It had reached an essential stage.

“I have seen and operated on larger, so it didn't surprise me,” Sherr said of the tumor. “However it was located right in and pressing on the area of the left brain that controls his right side, arm and leg, a hazardous spot for surgical treatment.”

On the midline of the brain is one of its most significant veins, and the tumor expectedly commenced along that wall, Sherr said. That presented different challenge: how to take it out without damaging that vital vein. If that vein is hurt, an individual could die in minutes.

What's next?

Heidi Perreault was studying at her Zimmerman home when she got a text message from her boyfriend.

It was not so fine news. That's all Twombly's message said.

She sent a text back asking him what it was.

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I think I have a brain tumor, he answered.

"It was fine that we now had a concept what it was," Perreault said in a latest conversation, "however it was scary having somewhat in his brain."

Still, questions remained. How do we get it out? What are the probable negative outcomes of operating on the brain? Will he be the same Kristian Twombly after the surgical treatment that he's now?

As the tumor was entwined with the tissues that control his right-side movement, Sherr required to uncover a way to the tumor and a way to getting it out.

"We knew we would have to use working and diffusion tensor imaging MRI chains to precisely find the regions around the tumor that were working and uncover a way in the tumor," Sherr said.

Those new kinds of MRIs "are just being accepted," he said, and both St. Cloud Clinic and CDI have lately received the costly technologies. They permit the operating specialist to see the brain in Three-D, to recognize where the tumor is and where the important brain tissues are that control movement.

Twombly's certainty in Sherr, whom he jokingly calls Dr. Sure Of Himself, made it simpler for him to select that he can have his brain surgical treatment in St. Cloud rather than at the Mayo Hospital where he had his heart surgical treatment.

“It was indeed type of acknowledging in that regard,” Twombly said. “There was no question that he was going to be capable to do it and that, yeah, I can have gone to the Mayo where I had my heart surgical treatment. I had no concerns about doing it in St. Cloud, and I’m pleased that I did.”

Companion feels concern

Mark Springer taught the History of Rock ‘n’ Roll class at St. Cloud State before Twombly was hired about 6 years ago. Twombly took over teaching that class and ended up being good friends with Springer, who’s interim dean of the academy’s Educational Facility of Liberal Arts.

Springer and Twombly crossed several units off Twombly’s “bucket list” before the 2009 heart surgical treatment. Later, Springer was one of a handful of persons in a tight-knit circle of music pals who would study about the brain tumor.

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Springer’s ideas directly turned to a educationist he once had who was identified with a brain tumor and died shortly after.

“My first response sincerely was that I was worried that he was a dead man walking,” Springer said. “That’s just from my personal experience. It heightened my concern dramatically. And then I wanted to know where it was and can they operate?”

Twombly planned the surgical treatment for the Friday before spring break, partially as he wanted to bound the quantity of days of work he’d miss.

“There was more tumor than cyst,” Sherr said. “It was an accurate and challenging tumor to take away.”

The surgical treatment took a number of hours, in which medical professionals utilized a microscope to guide their moves.

Springer was in South Africa on a study-overseas travel in his companion’s surgical treatment.

“That was tough,” he said. “It was difficult to be at a distance knowing that our companion was going through that.”

The postsurgery concerns shortly would turn to the quality of life that Twombly would have once he recovered.

New perspective

“Each day I’m astonished that he’s precisely what I knew before the surgical treatment,” Perreault said. “It is humbling that human beings have the capability to take away from his brain what was inside there and return him to me as he was before, teasing around with us and loving us. It’s really fantastic.”

About the only lasting effect of the surgical treatment is that Twombly has a void, or maybe space, in his brain where the tumor utilized to be. The brain doesn’t grow or maybe extend to fill that space, and Twombly and his pals had some fun with that.

There was a challenge to select what ideal to put in the void where the tumor once stayed.

Propositions ranged from a golf ball to some new electronic musical ingredient to a Wireless Connection hot spot.

Sherr told him the void in fact would fill with a liquid mix of sugars and some albumens.

“I was drinking tons of apple juice during the time,” Twombly said, “so I teased that it was going to be stuffed with apple juice.”

Actuality is that he’ll have to have normal brain scans to see if the tumor, which wasn’t cancerous, grows back. Twombly believes his heart condition and Marfan syndrome pose larger menaces down the driveway than his brain.

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Coached as a composer, he writes music however also likes to execute. He accepts that he can possibly have made due with some loss of motor control without it having a serious effect on his study or maybe his teaching.

Springer in addition is astonished at the idea that Twombly came out from brain surgical treatment the same individual.

“I was amazed. I figured there would be some lasting effect,” Springer said. “Though it was that they couldn’t take concern of the migraines. However Kristian is definitely no diverse than he was before he went in. He may be harboring that inside, however it hasn’t replaced his spirit.”

However Twombly has replaced. His starting Marfan's diagnosis came with a life expectancy of about Forty years. That's why he had such a nonchalant state of mind about the future and how much there was going to be for himself.

Medical advances have expanded that life expectancy for those with Marfan's. And Perreault and her 3 offsprings in addition have given Twombly greater perspective on life and what's vital.

"I can have been a little bit more living in the quick before the surgical procedures," he said. "It's a tough thing to grapple with. However the type of double whammy of these things coming together and the potential severity, it's a lot to consider. However I could state that. At no point have I sat down and said, 'Why me?'"

"I think he's done a much better work putting significance on the things that matter to him and less time sweating the smaller things," Perreault said.

And to his pals, he's an exceptional instance of the resilience of the human being spirit.

"To see companion go through that once, and then to see it two times? It's indeed tough," Springer said. "However I'm just astonished at contemporary medicine and the aptitude that these fantastic medical professionals have. And in addition the power of the human being spirit, not just to see it in Kristian and his recovery, however in his pals and family. Just to see that on display is fantastic. You read about it. You know, persons will read the paper and state, 'That's fine.' However till you live it and see it ..."

Editor's note: Twombly is a member of the Opinion Pages' Times Writers Group.

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