

The Caring Determination of a Physician

by Tracy H. Stanton

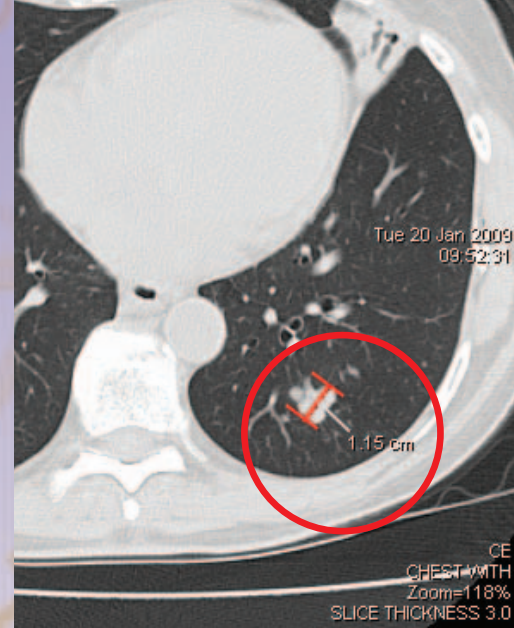
Dedication and perseverance are two attributes patients are often drawn to in a physician.

In the case of Mildred Love of Florence, she knew just who she wanted to provide her medical care when she was informed that she needed to see a physician who specialized in the

diagnosis and treatment of lung conditions and diseases.

It all began during an annual physical. Mildred's routine chest x-ray revealed a few shadows on her lungs. Dr. Steve Ross of Internal Medicine Associates of Florence was concerned and explained to Mildred that he wanted her to see a specialist. Mildred said she knew right away that she wanted an appointment with Pulmonologist Dr. Vinod Jona, who cares for patients at Carolina Health Care. Previous experience with his quality care led her down this path.

Mildred Love is grateful to Dr. Vinod Jona for relentlessly pursuing a diagnosis for her condition.



This scan of Mildred's lung indicates the nodule Dr. Jona was able to remove a piece of tissue using the new inReach technology.

Dr. Jona had previously treated Mildred's sister who suffered from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Mildred explained that her sister had passed away in 2007, but Dr. Jona's caring approach had impressed Mildred and her family so much that she knew if she ever needed pulmonary care, Dr. Jona was the physician she would seek.

"I'm just thankful we have physicians like Dr. Jona who don't give up in their search for an answer and who will go the last mile to determine what is wrong with you."

Mildred Love

As a six-year breast cancer survivor, Mildred was not worried about her appointment with Dr. Jona. However, after initially reviewing her case, Dr. Jona was concerned especially since Mildred had already battled cancer once.

"She first came to see me on July 31, 2008," said Dr. Jona. "Mildred had a total of three areas of interest. Two places were in her left lung. One nodule was in her right lung and it was increasing in size. At the time, I conferred with Mildred's oncologist, Dr. Michael Pavy, because with the nodules in her lungs growing in size I was very worried that her breast cancer had returned and metastasized to her lungs." Dr. Pavy also cares for patients at Carolina Health Care.

Normally, an increase in size of spots or shadows on a CT is consistent with cancer, according to Dr. Jona. As a part of her work-up, Mildred also had a PET scan, which was suggestive for cancer. Positron Emission Tomography or PET is a noninvasive procedure that provides biochemical and physiologic information about disease. It also helps physicians in their diagnosis and treatment of certain diseases such as cancer.

"When a patient has shadows on a CT scan that are growing in size and that light up on the PET scan, it is almost always cancer," added Dr. Jona.

"But, I never really thought it was cancer," said Mildred. "I wasn't afraid of what he was going to find; I just had a peace about it. He kept reassuring me after each test, too. Dr. Jona worked so hard to get to the root of the problem. He was just not giving up," said Mildred.

In addition to the PET scan, Dr. Jona performed a conventional bronchoscopy on Mildred but he was unable to reach the nodule in her right lung. A bronchoscopy is a procedure that allows the physician to directly visualize the interior passageways of the lower respiratory tract through a bronchoscope, a long, narrow, fiber optic, lighted tube inserted through the nose or mouth.

Mildred also underwent a needle biopsy guided by CT but it, too, did not provide a diagnosis. The only option remaining was for Mildred to undergo surgery for an open lung biopsy to be performed. Fortunately, during the time Dr. Jona was determining an answer to Mildred's condition, he received training using a new piece of technology.

"In January, he told me that he had been trained in a new procedure and he thought it would be beneficial in

determining my diagnosis," said Mildred.

The new technology allows physicians to make a diagnosis sooner in patients with hard to reach lung lesions. The inReach™ System by superDimension provides electromagnetic navigation and guidance to distant regions of the lungs in a minimally-invasive manner, enabling physicians such as Dr. Jona to locate, test and plan treatment for lung lesions and lymph nodes that are difficult to access with traditional bronchoscopy.

Similar to Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, the inReach System provides a three-dimensional virtual "roadmap" of the lungs, generated from CT images. Once the patient's lungs have been mapped, Dr. Jona uses inReach guiding catheters with standard bronchoscopes to reach the targeted lesion.

"Because the system is minimally-invasive, it enables us to safely diagnose patients whose medical conditions don't allow us to perform higher-risk surgical procedures. In Mildred's case, I wanted to get an answer without putting her through surgery," added Dr. Jona.

Dr. Jona performed the inReach procedure on Mildred on January 29, 2009. Mildred said she did not feel any discomfort from the outpatient procedure. "I just had to take it easy for two to three days," said Mildred. She also was restricted from eating for 24 hours.

Using the new technology, Dr. Jona was able to remove small pieces of the nodule in Mildred's right lung for testing. He explained that this was the first time he could reach this area in her lung adding that it is often difficult to reach a specific nodule in the lung, because it is a moving target.

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“It doesn’t stay in one place because the patient is breathing while you are performing the procedure.”

After the procedure and subsequent testing of the tissue, Dr. Jona was finally able to provide Mildred with a conclusive diagnosis of a highly treatable infection.

“There were no cancer cells in Mildred’s lung,” said Dr. Jona. “I was surprised but happily surprised. I was also glad I could make a diagnosis because I did not want her to have to continue undergoing regular CT scans because of the exposure to radiation. She had already had at least three CT scans performed.”

Today, Mildred is currently under the care of Dr. Kevin Shea, also with Carolina Health Care, for antibiotic treatment of her infection.

Mildred expressed her appreciation for Dr. Jona’s treatment.

“His caring technique and attentiveness reminds me of doctors from long ago who made house calls,” said Mildred. “At my first appointment with him, he walked in the door and said, ‘I remember you’ as soon as he saw me. I was amazed that he recalled meeting me when he cared for my sister. And, I like a physician who if he sees you out in public he takes the time to come up and speak to you.

“He is the finest, kindest, most caring physician. I’m just thankful we have physicians like Dr. Jona who don’t give up in their search for an answer and who will go the last mile to determine what is wrong with you. I never gave up on him and he never gave up on me,” added Mildred.



Dr. Jona demonstrates how the new inReach system and a standard bronchoscope allows him to reach lung lesions.

The McLeod Health Foundation funded the new inReach™ System by superDimension as a result of a request by Dr. Vinod Jona. He explained how inReach could save lives by diagnosing lung cancer at an earlier stage.

“Thanks to the McLeod Foundation, we are pleased to offer our patients this technology that allows us to biopsy suspicious areas in the lungs that were previously hard to reach and potentially offer patients more conclusive diagnoses,” said Dr. Jona.

Prior to the purchase of this new technology, patients experiencing symptoms of lung disease or those who had suspected lesions were examined and treated with standard bronchoscopes, needle aspiration, or surgery.

By providing electromagnetic navigation, the inReach System increases the chances that a patient will safely receive a diagnosis and begin treatment. In addition, inReach allows access to lesions located in the lower part of the lung that the

standard bronchoscope can not reach and enables cancer staging in the lymph nodes.

McLeod Regional Medical Center is one of only three hospitals in South Carolina, and the only hospital in the 12-county region McLeod serves, to provide this important new advancement in the early detection of lung cancer.

Lung cancer is the most common cancer-related death in American men and the second most common in women, claiming more lives than breast cancer, prostate cancer and colorectal cancer combined. Early detection of cancer is documented to be critical. According to the American Cancer Society, the five-year survival rate for those whose lung cancer is found when it is localized is nearly 50%.

The inReach system also has the potential to help reduce the mortality rate for lung cancer by helping physicians diagnose and recommend treatment for the disease in its early stages.