

January 23, 2020

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Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
c/o Courtney Avery, Administrator  
525 W Jefferson St, 2nd Floor  
Springfield, IL 62761

HEALTH FACILITIES &  
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD


Re: Letter of Support for Proton Therapy

As a patient with cancer, I am writing this letter to express my support of the plans by OSF HealthCare to offer proton beam therapy in Peoria.

- I was diagnosed with a skull based rhabdomyosarcoma (extremely rare in adults) in June 2019. The tumor was determined to not be resectable because of all the vital structures (nerves and vessels) it involved in my face. This means that all treatment I receive is palliative not curative and the only options I have for treatment are chemotherapy and radiation. I received 3 cycles of very toxic chemotherapy over the summer to be followed by radiation. However, because my treatment is palliative, the quality of my life during and after treatment is most important to me. After discussing radiation therapy options with Dr. James McGee he recommended Proton Beam therapy rather than the ionizing radiation currently offered in Peoria. I was referred to the Proton Beam Center at Northwestern and my insurance approved the 35 required treatments (in theory 7 weeks away from home).
- The treatments themselves were easy – about 30 minutes door to door, Monday thru Friday. However, because I started on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving that meant my treatment extended through multiple holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year) resulting in four-4 day treatment weeks which meant extending my stay away from home to 8 weeks. (And, my birthday fell during our time away as well). We stayed in an extended stay hotel the entire time which was nice but was definitely not home. The side effects I experienced from Proton Beam therapy were very mild including mild mucositis and discomfort, some mild skin redness and a small patch of local hair loss. I really could have worked through my treatments had I been able to receive them locally. In fact I completed treatment on 1/9 and returned to work on 1/13.
- I whole-heartedly support the effort to bring Proton Beam therapy to Peoria! Not only for the convenience of having this treatment offered locally but Proton Beam therapy is a kinder/gentler radiation resulting in fewer side effects and improved quality of life.

I appreciate the commitment by OSF HealthCare to support patients with cancer, survivors, and their families. I urge you to approve this project that will ensure members of my community will have access to the care they need.

Best regards,

  
Debra E. Beach  
5622 W. Grande Circle  
Peoria, IL 61615