

March 11, 2021

Courtney Avery
Board Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson Street, Second Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Re: Letter of Support- Mercy Hospital and Medical Center, Exemption #003-21

Dear Ms. Avery,

I had a swollen eye and my doctor suggested an MRI. I could've had a thyroid issue or just inflammation. The MRI confirmed a brain tumor. I was scared, confused and questioned the unexpected outcome.

I visited University of Chicago Medicine and two brain surgeons refused to proceed with any treatment. They gave me no explanation. I was just considered a "high-risk" patient. Fearing my future would forever be changed if not given a chance, I leaned on the lord for strength and guidance. Days turned into weeks and my fear increased. I hoped and prayed for the blessing of a doctor with clearer communication.

Unexpectedly, a family members connection revealed, a new doctor located in Michigan; Dr. Jawad Shah. They thought he might give me answers on what I would need. I live in Indiana so; I mailed my MRI results to Dr. Shah for review. An appointment was scheduled and I tried to stay positive but, with no expectations.

Dr. Shah explained the specific details of treatment options and what the next step could be, based on my decision. In that moment, I was completely present and had more faith, over my fears. Dr. Shah brought calmness to the conversation, he was patient with answering every question I had, he was respectful towards me and made me feel at ease. I never felt pressured to make a decision on what treatment was best. I took my time and thought what option I would be comfortable with. Choosing surgery, had many risks because the brain tumor was around my optic nerve, behind my left eye. Dr. Shah assured me, he would do his best to carefully remove as much as he could. My immediate fear didn't exist anymore. I definitely knew I was in good hands with Dr. Shah.

I decided to do surgery and a few weeks of radiology and chemo therapy. I was out of ICU in three days and walked out of the hospital in less than a week. I was amazed by the medical team connected to Dr. Shah. Everyone from; physical therapy, radiology, oncology and the staff at his office. All of them helped me through every stage of recovery.

Dr. Jawad Shah is a kind hearted, respectful man who has more patience than any doctor I've ever met. Every interaction with him during appointments, before and after surgery, he began to feel like a family member. It has been almost five years since my surgery. I am so grateful the surgeons in Chicago didn't want to take a chance on me. Dr. Shah was the unexpected blessing I could have ever imagined. He embraces all people who need someone to get the strength, support and understanding during the treatment or surgery they need.

Since my first appointment with Dr. Shah, I was welcomed at IINN and no longer alone. I have consistently felt connected and safe. I wasn't just another "patient" but treated as a person, Dr. Shah will always have a space in my heart.

I thank-you Dr. Shah for saving my life, my vision and renewing my strength I forgot I had.

Sincerely,

Natalie Leavitt