

Chris Caswell



Starting from a scab on my skull leading to and a wide area excision and a skin graft at Frimley Park Hospital, it appeared that the melanoma had been fully removed. Unfortunately, within days melanoma nodules formed around my wound, and I was referred to a Consultant Oncologist at the Royal Surrey County Hospital to start immunotherapy with Ipilimumab and Nivolumab, putting my body into hyperdrive to attack the melanoma. Within the next month I had lost two stone in weight, suffered severe side effects including rashes, colitis, hair loss, mental confusion, and with being weak and unable to function, my body was attacking everything! A sentinel node biopsy and PET scan confirmed at least ten body wide metastatic sites (more in the brain) and, hardly able to stand, I was hospitalised for a week, also being informed that my pituitary gland had "blown up"..... but there were pills for that! Suppression of side effects and coping with pituitary loss was next on the list to be tackled. Continued immunotherapy and scans over the next few months lead to the astonishing "all clear" by the Consultant, surprising both of us, and which took a long time to sink in. Being pulled back from being so close to the edge by the Oncology Team and nurses at RSHC is an amazing achievement and deserves lasting gratitude.

With uncertainties, and with many questions you may wish to ask, I can be a "buddy" at the end of the telephone, to chat to and discuss your concerns.

Having been in your shoes and gone through the physical and mental roller coaster ride of a cancer path, I can be a listening ear and sounding board.

Not being a medical professional, I can offer a patient's view based on personal experiences of the path I have moved down, and where that has led me.