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1,000TH PATIENT COMPLETES TREATMENT AT MPRI

Bloomington, Ind. – Twelve-year-old Natalie Crum of Ohio is the 1,000th patient to complete treatment at the Midwest Proton Radiotherapy Institute (MPRI). The soon-to-be-sixth grader spent six weeks of her summer in Bloomington, Ind., undergoing proton therapy for a slow-growing brain tumor originally diagnosed when she was just two years old.

“Our goal in treating Natalie was to make sure her tumor no longer grows and to minimize the risks of radiation therapy,” said Dr. Andrew Chang, director of pediatric radiation oncology.

Ten years ago, neurosurgeons in Ohio were able to remove 70 percent of the tennis ball-sized tumor, called an astrocytoma, at the base of Natalie’s skull. When the remnants of the tumor near her brainstem began growing earlier this year, doctors at Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, referred her to MPRI.

“Sparing healthy tissue such as bone and brain from radiation is critical, especially when treating children,” said Dr. Chang. “With proton therapy, we can reduce the long-term risks of developing a secondary cancer later, as well as the risk of developmental and growth delays that are more likely with conventional X-ray radiation.”

Natalie received five proton therapy treatments per week over a six-week period beginning June 9. After each session — which lasted less than an hour — she and her family made the most of the rest of their time in Bloomington, exploring the surrounding area and swimming at the golf resort where they rented a condominium. On weekends, the Crum family made the three and a half hour trip home to spend time with their other children.

“Natalie is a warrior,” said Natalie’s father Bennie Crum. “She did not complain, and she knows MPRI is making her better.” By the end of her treatment plan, Natalie felt great and experienced no side effects — other than a slight loss of hair near the treatment site.

The entire experience made the Crums strong advocates for proton therapy.

“Before our doctors in Ohio told us about proton therapy, we did not know it existed,” said Natalie’s mother Regina. “I hope Natalie can help put a face on proton therapy and help others learn about this treatment option.”

“There are no negatives to proton therapy,” Bennie Crum added. “This is the wave of the future right here.”

MPRI is a state-of-the-art center offering proton therapy: a highly precise mechanism of treating cancer. Since February 2004, MPRI physicians have treated adults and children with both benign and cancerous tumors. For more information and conditions treated, visit www.mpri.org or call 866.ITS.MPRI. To read more about Natalie’s treatment and other patient stories, visit www.mpri.org/patients/prospective-patients/patient-stories/.

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