

The Patient Experience

Cancer Resection, Facial Reconstruction: Multidisciplinary Team Gets Patient Rocking Again

For 55-year-old musician and music teacher Paul Yutzy, Johns Hopkins surgeons Paul Flint, Patrick Byrne and Ralph Tufano rank right up there with Jimi Hendrix on the list of people who have changed his life.

Hendrix sealed a 15-year-old aspiring rocker's fate as a guitarist and vocal performer when Yutzy saw him in concert in the 1960s. This winter, Flint, Byrne and Tufano successfully treated Yutzy when tonsil/base-of-tongue cancer recurred fairly quickly after chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

Flint, a friend and former guitar student of Yutzy's, brought Yutzy to his Hopkins colleagues after symptoms indicated the return of his cancer. In a 14-hour operation, Tufano, a head and neck surgical oncology specialist, resected the base of the tongue and a portion of the lateral pharyngeal wall via a mandibulotomy approach. For the facial reconstruction, Byrne, a fa-



Paul Yutzy

cial plastic and reconstructive surgeon, performed a microvascular free tissue transfer (a radial forearm free flap) using donor tissue from Yutzy's arm near the wrist.

"Dr. Byrne performed the reconstruction from tissue on my right hand, so that my left hand was not impeded in playing the guitar," Yutzy says.

Yutzy, who has performed in local rock bands during his career, has spent the past 22 years teaching music at Friends School in Baltimore. After his bout with cancer left him weakened, he returned to instructing third-, fourth- and fifth-grade rock bands one day a week. He hopes to return soon to one of his favorite gigs—initiating 4-, 5- and 6-year-olds into the world of music.

"When introducing a child to music, you need to encompass the spirit of the song in addition to the words and notes," he says.

A recent benefit concert in his honor gave him the chance to leap back into performing.

"It was perhaps my career highlight when Paul took the stage to sing and play an amazing version of 'Mustang Sally,'" Byrne says. "Folks were dancing in the aisles."

Yutzy was touched by the presence of his physicians.

"Half my medical team was there. When I announced I wouldn't be here if it weren't for them, the audience gave them a standing ovation," he says. "Now, I plan on performing until they have to wheel me down the stage."