

A Stitch in Time

Prompt surgery to remove cancer gives Barbara Kimmitt continued quality of life

Some hobbies are just for fun or to pass the time. Barbara Kimmitt's hobby is all that and more. It's become something of a mission.

Kimmitt, 72, loves fabric and the scraps she's collected over the years were starting to pile up in her Farragut home. Now she's putting them to good use.

"I have started quilting and I'm not very far because I'm a real perfectionist," she says. If you ask Kimmitt why she didn't start when she was younger, she'll give you a very direct answer.

"I never thought about dying before I could sew all this stuff up," Kimmitt says.

Unexpected Diagnosis

Kimmitt came to the emergency department at Parkwest Medical Center one morning in February 2018 with a bowel obstruction. She wasn't too concerned because it was something her mother had experienced as well.

"When they told me I had a bowel obstruction I thought, OK, well, I'm much younger than she was, so I'll have surgery and everything will be hunky-dory," Kimmitt says.

Instead, Kimmitt was stunned by a further diagnosis that would change everything. Parkwest surgeon Norma Edwards, MD, had some good news and some bad news.

"I don't even remember what the good news was," Kimmitt says. "All I heard was, 'You have a bowel obstruction. More than likely, it's cancer and it is not curable.'"



Norma Edwards, MD

Dr. Edwards, board certified general surgeon, was calm and reassuring. "It's not a death sentence," she told her patient.

"She had done her routine colonoscopy. She did everything she was supposed to do. She just happened to have the bad luck of having a tumor that grew quickly between her colonoscopies," said Dr. Edwards.

Kimmitt was old enough to fully understand that life isn't always fair. Still, it was devastating to hear. "I just about died right there on the spot," Kimmitt says, "but everything worked out OK."

Solving the Problem

Dr. Edwards performed a bowel resection, removing the area where the cancer had developed and reattaching the open ends of the colon.

Several weeks later, Kimmitt returned to Parkwest so Dr. Edwards could insert a port for cancer medication. The first medication was chemotherapy.

"Chemotherapy worked for a month or two," Kimmitt says. Then continued testing began to show that her carcinoembryonic anti-



Parkwest Medical Center's most recent expansion and renovation included a new patient care tower, additional operating rooms, a clinical observation unit for medical/surgical patients and a dedicated surgery entrance featuring a comfortable and welcoming check-in area.



Barbara Kimmitt is back on her feet after her cancer was removed.

gen (CEA) numbers, a type of tumor marker indicating cancer cell growth, were going up and the chemo wasn't working the way it should.

After further tests, an oncologist prescribed a can-

cer medicine that worked with Kimmitt's immune system to interfere with the growth and spread of cancer cells in the body.

"It's been like a miracle drug," Kimmitt says. "My CEA had been up at about

2,400, and normal is considered zero to five. Now I've been steady for about six months at 3.4."

Like Family

Since then, Dr. Edwards has also repaired a hernia for Kimmitt, and sent her to the Parkwest emergency department in time to be successfully treated for an embolism. Kimmitt has relied on her surgeon for both medical treatment and medical advice.

"She's kind of like family to me. I just love her to death," Kimmitt says. "And I love Parkwest. I don't think I'd go anywhere else."

Dr. Edwards accepts the compliment, but says Kimmitt deserves some praise, too. "She's a very motivated patient and she did everything we asked her to do," Dr. Edwards says. "It makes a huge

difference in post-op care and recovery when patients participate and do the things that we ask them to do. She's done remarkably well."

Aside from the professional doctor-patient relationship, Dr. Edwards has connected with Kimmitt on a personal level. "She's a remarkable lady with a beautiful spirit and I just adore her," Dr. Edwards says. "I'm really glad that our paths crossed, even though I wish it was in a different way. I think we're both really happy that we've gotten a chance to know each other."

Parkwest Medical Center is a home base for skilled surgeons who perform a wide range of procedures that restore quality of life to thousands of patients every year. To learn more, visit TreatedWell.com.

Colonoscopy: An Important Screening Tool for Your Health

A colonoscopy can help your provider look for problems in your colon. These include:

- Any early signs of cancer
- Red or swollen tissue
- Open sores or ulcers
- Bleeding

A colonoscopy is also used to screen for colorectal cancer in people who don't have any symptoms of the disease.

A colonoscopy may be used to check and, if needed, treat conditions such as:

- Colon polyps
- Tumors
- Ulceration

- Redness or swelling
- Pouches (diverticula) along the colon wall
- Narrowed areas of the colon
- Any objects that might be in the colon

It may also be used to find the cause of unexplained chronic diarrhea or bleeding in the gastrointestinal tract. It can also be used to check the colon after cancer treatment, and may be used when other tests show the need for more testing.

Your healthcare provider may have other reasons to advise a colonoscopy.



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