

# Survival and Hope *Life After Cancer*



 **JESUS CARDONA, 63**  
**DIAGNOSIS: ESOPHAGEAL CANCER**  
**WITH METASTASIS TO BRAIN**

## The Basics:

- **RESIDENCE:** Victorville
- **OCCUPATION:** Retired maintenance worker and “jack of all trades”
- **FAMILY:** Lupe Cardona, 61, wife; Sarah Cardona, 31, daughter and the third of four children
- **HOBBIES:** Cars
- **PHILOSOPHY:** Live day by day and make each day as good as it can get

By Alberta Hale Crigler

In April 2017, Jesus Cardona decided problems he had while eating were serious enough that he should see a doctor. “I couldn’t swallow anymore,” he said. “Then food would feel like it was stuck – constantly, all the time.”

His wife, Lupe, took him to the hospital where doctors performed an endoscopy. They found a tumor at the bottom of his esophagus and the top of his stomach. It was so large there was only a small opening for food to pass through.

Doctors told him he was not a candidate for surgery. Instead, his

cancer was treated with chemotherapy. The next month, in May, two tumors were discovered in Cardona’s brain.

As a result of the cancer and treatments, Jesus has some difficulty speaking.

“They removed a large, golf-ball sized tumor



in May last year,” his daughter Sarah Cardona said. “The other one the neurosurgeon didn’t want to touch because (Jesus) could become paralyzed. They did radiation – that helped it shrink, but didn’t get rid of it.”

In February 2018, Jesus began having seizures. A new MRI showed the remaining brain tumor had grown.

The side effects of further radiation on the tumor in Jesus’ brain outweighed any benefit he would receive.

That left Jesus with a difficult choice: no more treatment, or surgery that would likely result in at least some paralysis.

“In April 2018, that tumor was removed,” said Sarah. “It grew in size and came toward the surface of the brain, so the surgeon was comfortable removing it this time.

“The first couple days he was normal,” Lupe said, “then his mobility started to decline. Now, he has limited mobility on his left side. He uses

a walker, wheel chair, and (mobility) scooter. He can walk about 20 feet, then he needs to sit down.”

Lupe said caring for her husband is a commitment she made a long time ago.

“You have your spouse,” she said. “For me it’s till death do us part. I was 15 when we met; he was 17. My dad saw his facial hair and said, ‘no, no, no.’ But he got used to it.

“It is a lot of work, truly a lot of work. Sarah helps out a lot. Our other children, too.”

Lupe and Sarah both

told them we have to get together with this and help mom take care of dad. Sarah is our major support. She works overnight at St. Mary.”

Lupe said coping with cancer is difficult for Jesus, but “he still wants to push forward.”

“I don’t know why I am like this,” Jesus said. “I used to do a lot of work. I am a workaholic. I don’t know why I got this. It started with my heart, esophagus, head, both legs and arm.

“I say to myself, ‘why me?’ I didn’t ask for this. I am a good guy. I would like to get better, but it seems like I am not getting better.”

“The seizures set Jesse back,” Lupe said. “He gets depressed and he gets mad. He is get-up-and-go, and he hates that he needs help.”

“If I am off work, his favorite stores are Lowe’s and Walmart,” Sarah said. “He gets on his walker or in the mobility scooter and goes.

“The insurance finally approved a scooter for home. About a month-and-a-half ago we got it. My dad has ridden his scooter to my sister’s house a few blocks away – maybe a half mile.”

When asked what he would tell someone who just received a cancer diagnosis, Jesus said: “Don’t get your head cut open.

Still, Lupe stays positive. “Live every day to the fullest. For me, I tell him, when it’s our time to go, Jesus will call us home. Until then, we have to live every day to the fullest.

“There is no reason to sit around and worry. What are we going to do? Make ourselves unhappy? No, we can’t live that way. We have to push on.”

“*I say to myself, ‘why me?’ I didn’t ask for this.*”

work at St. Mary, and Lupe said they chose to go to St. Mary’s “sister hospital,” St. Jude Hospital, in Fullerton for Jesus’s treatment.

“His primary oncologist, neurologist and neurosurgeon are all in Fullerton. My husband needed a higher level of care, and they have more specialties there.”

The Cardonas’ four adult children share transport duties. “We leave early, 6 to 6:30 a.m. to allow for travel. We see two or three doctors,” Lupe said.

“He has an infusion once every three weeks. We go for labs, then the oncologist, then infusion, then the endocrinologist for his diabetes.”

“Each one of my adult children knows they will be spending the day there. They get enough notice to take off work.


“When we found out about the surgery, Sarah



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**Q WHAT DOES SKIN CANCER LOOK LIKE ?**

**A** The skin cancer which occurs most commonly is basal cell carcinoma. It may appear as a non-healing sore or bump on the skin. These should be diagnosed and treated early as their continued growth makes treatment more difficult. If you have any questions about a possible skin cancer, be sure to consult a Board Certified Dermatologist.

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