

Profile of a Survivor: Hai Pham



When Hai Pham was diagnosed with cancer, he was dangerously ill. He had just finished dental school and thought his fatigue and weight loss were due to late nights studying and the pressure of exams.

“Being a health care provider, I should have seen all the signs, but I was in denial,” he says.

One day while working, he bumped his right leg on one of the dental chairs. What should have been a harmless bruise turned into a crisis requiring surgery to stem internal bleeding. When the hematology/oncology fellow appeared at his hospital bedside, Hai realized what was happening: He had chronic myeloid leukemia. He would be in the ICU for the next three weeks as doctors fought to stabilize him.

“The hardest thing was seeing my family come into the ICU and look so sad,” says Hai. “What really drove me to hang on was to make sure that I could help take care of my parents. For the longest time they worked odd jobs to put us kids through school. I knew that I wanted to help make their lives better, too. Because it’s a team effort. That’s how my parents raised us.”

Hai’s appreciation shines through when he talks about his mom and dad. He’s equally proud of his younger siblings: Two of his brothers are following

closely in Hai’s footsteps to practice pediatric medicine and dentistry.

“We’re all really close and we help each other out,” says Hai.

Hai’s family expanded when he married his fiancée, Natalie, surrounded by friends and family in the Columbia River Gorge.

“If it weren’t for the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute and Dr. Brian Druker giving me the gift of life, my wedding day would never have happened,” he says.

A FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Gleevec, the targeted cancer therapy Dr. Druker discovered, now manages Hai’s chronic myeloid leukemia. Cancer has become a treatable condition for Hai — not a terrifying death sentence.

Hai is committed to helping his own pediatric dental patients stay healthy and well. “It’s why I became a health care provider,” he says. “I wanted to give back to society.”

“Cancer affects so many people around us, children and adults,” Hai says. “My hope is that we can someday find a solution to prevent cancer before it even occurs. I feel like here at the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute, they will have the ability to do that with all the great research they’re doing.”

Taking Care of Our Community

SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE A LONG-TERM IMPACT

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