

Living **PROOF**

THE VALUE OF A COLONOSCOPY

In June 2006, Judge Kevin Robbins received a phone call that changed his life. The caller was Rafael Prevot, a close friend who lived in New York City.

“Rafael told me he had stage IV colon cancer and it had metastasized,” says Robbins, who is on the bench at Detroit’s 36th District Court and is a visiting judge for the Wayne County Circuit Court Criminal Division. “Rafael asked me to promise that I would get a colonoscopy, and I told him I would. He died in 2008 at age 49. He was just five days younger than me.”

Robbins remained true to his word and got the test. He also received an unexpected result: a stage III cancer diagnosis.

“I was completely shocked,” Robbins says. “I was just 47 and had absolutely no symptoms. I had recently been married and had a newborn son. My late mother was also being treated for esophageal cancer and I was helping to care for her. Suddenly, I was also diagnosed with cancer.”

Robbins chose to be treated at the Karmanos Cancer Center, the same hospital where his mother received care. He also chose the same physician: Philip Philip, M.D., Ph.D., F.R.C.P., a member of the Gastrointestinal Oncology Multidisciplinary Team and professor of Medicine and Oncology at Karmanos and Wayne State University School of Medicine.

“I was so happy with the care my mom received from Dr. Philip, I knew that I wanted him to treat me,” Robbins says. “He gave me a lot of

support when I felt apprehensive. My mom and I went to Karmanos for treatments together.”

Robbins’ cancer was spreading quickly. After undergoing surgery, Robbins began an aggressive six-month chemotherapy regimen, followed by regular surveillance. Two years later, Robbins became cancer-free. He continues to see Dr. Philip for checkups.

“A colonoscopy is the best way to see if a colorectal problem is caused by underlying cancer,” Dr. Philip says. “We think colonoscopies will reduce the number of new cases and people dying from the disease. The average age for an initial colonoscopy is 50, but you may want to get the test earlier if you have a family history of colon cancer, or some other related cancer or bowel condition. The rate of colon cancer incidence and colonic polyps are higher in younger African Americans, and they should consider getting the initial colonoscopy before age 50, preferably starting at age of 45.”

Robbins remains thankful he got the test before turning 50, and urges family, friends and colleagues to do the same.

“Rafael was my guardian angel,” says Robbins, who now has three children. “He could have crawled into a shell and kept his diagnosis to himself. Instead, he urged his family and friends to get a colonoscopy. And I’m forever grateful, because I’d be dead if I didn’t get that test right away. It’s all about early diagnosis and treatment – I’ll never stop spreading that message.”

For more information, call 1-800-KARMANOS or 1-800-527-6266.



JUDGE KEVIN ROBBINS