

KAREN WOYS

Really quite wonderful

In January 2010, Karen Woys went for routine blood work prior to a scheduled surgery. “I had complained of fatigue, but my doctor said it was because I was overweight and getting older,” said Karen, who was 56 at the time.

When the results of her blood work showed an alarmingly low platelet level, Karen was sent to a hematologist, who diagnosed her with Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS), a form of leukemia where the bone marrow does not produce enough healthy blood cells. “I went from being completely healthy all my life to being critically ill, and I had no idea.”

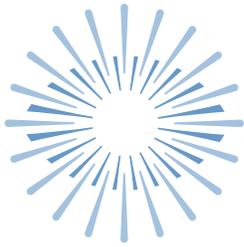
After several months of medication therapy, Karen decided that she needed to move forward with the next step in her treatment; a bone marrow transplant. A perfect match was found in November 2010 and she underwent the procedure at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, MD. Her transplant went smoothly. “I was lucky. I didn’t really have a lot of GVHD, except for my eyes and skin,” remembers Karen. GVHD – graft-versus-host disease – is a common complication after a bone marrow transplant.

As time went on, however, Karen’s eyes got worse and worse. She tried a number of treatments, with varying degrees of success. While trying to find the right treatment, Karen was diagnosed with a second cancer – stage 4 squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue – in the summer of 2012. Luckily, surgery to remove the spot on her tongue, as well as a number of neighboring lymph nodes, seems to have done the trick, and Karen is in remission from both diseases.

Despite her other health battles, her poor ocular health was having an increasingly negative effect on Karen’s quality of life. She needed to use the computer constantly for work, but, “I couldn’t look at the screen for more than a few minutes without my eyes becoming painfully dry and tired.” Driving became nearly impossible.

continued on page 2





BOSTON FOUNDATION *for* SIGHT

Karen Woys continued

In 2014, a fortuitous conversation with a nurse led Karen to investigate the possibility of BostonSight® PROSE treatment, available in her area at Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins. She found out that her health insurance would cover the treatment but was hesitant, in part because, “I was resistant to the idea of inserting, removing and cleaning the devices every day,” she said. But she ultimately decided to give the PROSE clinic a call. “I got lucky and there was a cancellation. I got to see Dr. Hessen the next day.” Michelle Hessen, OD, BostonSight PROSE Clinical Fellow, determined that Karen was an ideal candidate for BostonSight PROSE treatment.

“Dr. Hessen is a very, very good doctor,” said Karen. “She is patient and answered all of my questions.” Karen had similar high praise for Michelle Ricks, Dr. Hessen’s

assistant. “Michelle not only explained what I had to do, but she explained why. She was so encouraging and always had a positive attitude.”

After several days of treatment and training in the daily application and removal of her new PROSE devices, Karen went home, with her quality of life restored. “Dr. Hessen gave me a different prescription in each eye. I can read without glasses and my distance vision is almost perfect!”

Today, Karen is grateful for the little things. “I can read the captions in foreign films again. I can sit and read for hours and hours without my eyes getting tired and irritated. Just being able to look outside my window and see the birds, wildlife, and trees – it’s really quite wonderful.”