

Charles Krauthammer

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Dear Shepherd Family,

A mere thanks cannot encompass the breadth of gratitude I feel towards the Shepherd Center. You have established a splendid institution that is brilliantly designed for spinal cord patients.

I suffered my injury 46 years ago but came to the Shepherd Center following a major cancer surgery I underwent in Washington DC last year. A cascade of secondary complications had left me near the edge of death. With all other options exhausted, my son scoured the country to find the finest experts and best hospitals and arranged for an emergency flight to Atlanta so that I could begin treatment at Shepherd.

Since that time, the improvement in my condition had been remarkable. The progress had been day by day, with ups and down and temporary setbacks to be sure. But my many medical needs (various scans and tests, small procedures and major surgeries, dialysis and more) were dealt with brilliantly, in seamless coordination with the able staff and specialists at Piedmont Hospital (next door and physically conjoined by tunnel for easy access). The Shepherd Center's expertise in SCI vent-weaning and its fully equipped in-house ICU make it a truly unique facility in the country, one I would advise anyone who has suffered a spinal cord injury to seek out if they can. Along every axis – my muscle strength, range of motion, kidney and lung function and overall stamina – the Shepherd staff had me well on my way back to recovery.

My family and I were looking forward to completing the program in the near future and returning to our lives. Unfortunately, that was not to be: The cancer, thought to have been successfully removed by surgery in Washington, returned in a new form of aggressive metastasis. This is a fatal development. There is nothing that I or the Shepherd staff could have done to avert this. It does not detract from the lifesaving progress we made up to this point.

Very few people would have had the courage and determination of the Shepherd family in founding so magnificent an institution to help precisely those people who have suffered an injury akin to James's. How you found a staff of doctors, nurses, technicians, physical and occupational and speech and respiratory therapists so uniformly skilled, caring, competent and energetic is beyond me. But you did it and I congratulate you for it.

May you be granted, for our sake if nothing else, many years of continued stewardship of what is without a doubt the finest spinal cord rehab institution in the country. I salute you.

With profound thanks,
Charles Krauthammer