

April 19, 2017 | By Heather Buschman, PhD

Rock Tour “Text2Give” Supports Immunotherapy at UC San Diego Health

Rock star drummer Rikki Rockett feels very lucky to be on tour with his band, Poison, this spring. A year ago, he didn't know if he would survive tongue cancer. But after participating in an immunotherapy clinical trial at Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health, he was declared cancer-free in July 2016.

To give back, Rockett is now asking concert-goers to join him in supporting immunotherapy at Moores Cancer Center. At U.S. stops on the Poison tour now through June, attendees will hear his story, watch a video about Moores Cancer Center and be given the opportunity to donate \$10 by texting “RIKKI” to 50555. (Anyone else at home can also participate at any time.)

“Without the doctors and staff at Moores Cancer Center, I can honestly say I don't think I'd be here today, to say nothing about playing drums and going on tour again,” Rockett said. “I am incredibly grateful that I've got my life back and I'll get to see my two children grow up.”

These “text2give” donations will directly support cancer immunotherapy at Moores Cancer Center, including research, clinical trials and patient care. Rather than directly targeting tumors as in traditional cancer therapies, immunotherapy boosts the body's immune system, better enabling it to attack cancer cells itself. This type of treatment is only available at a few specific medical centers around the country.

“We can't thank Rikki and all his fans enough for supporting our work,” said Ezra Cohen, MD, co-head of the Solid Tumor Therapeutics Research Program, associate director of Translational Sciences and one of Rockett's oncologists at Moores Cancer Center. “We are delighted that Rikki responded so well to immunotherapy. He had already been through a lot with chemotherapy and radiation treatment before he came to us, but his cancer recurred. While this approach is still in the early stages and isn't right for everyone, with Rikki's support we hope to make immunotherapy available to more patients before they have to go through everything he did.”



After an immunotherapy clinical trial at Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health helped him overcome tongue cancer, rock star drummer Rikki Rockett gives back with a “text2give” campaign during the spring 2017 tour of his band, Poison.

According to Cohen, immunotherapy has several advantages over traditional therapy: There are fewer side effects. It can specifically eradicate cancer cells almost anywhere in the body. And it's effective against tumors that are resistant to chemotherapy and radiation.

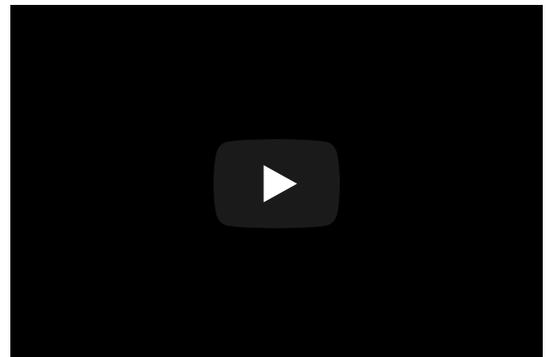
Rockett's clinical trial is testing a combination of two immunotherapy drugs that remove the defenses that cancers use to hide from the immune system. The first is Keytruda, a drug FDA-approved for some cancers — it helped get former President Jimmy Carter's metastatic melanoma into remission — but was only recently approved for Rockett's type of oral cancer. The second experimental immunotherapy drug Rockett receives in the trial is called epacadostat.

In addition to raising money to support research and patient care, Rockett is also spreading the word about immunotherapy. "My hope is that by talking to other cancer patients, I might be able to lessen their pain and suffering," he said. "I know from experience that chemotherapy and radiation are not fun. If I can help anyone else, it would help give reason to what I went through."

Text2give charges will appear on your wireless bill, or be deducted from your prepaid balance. All purchases must be authorized by account holder. You must be 18 years of age or have parental permission to participate. Message and data rates may apply. Poison tour dates and locations can be found at poisonweb.com/tour

About Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health

Moores Cancer Center is one of only 45 National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the country. It is also the first and only San Diego-based member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, an alliance of the world's leading cancer centers, and is certified by the Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI), the leading quality program of the American Society of Clinical Oncology.



For adults newly diagnosed with cancer, treatment at an NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center means superior survival and recovery rates due to the fullness of care, diverse medical, surgical, and radiation oncology sub-specialties, access to breakthrough clinical trials, advanced supportive care and utilization of exacting quality metrics.

Patients have access to therapies, surgeries and clinical trials not offered in community settings. Moores Cancer Center currently operates more than 170 open treatment trials. These investigational therapies include advanced, highly personalized stem cell-based approaches and immunotherapies that leverage the inherent healing powers of the human body.

MEDIA CONTACT

Heather Buschman, 858-249-0456, hbuschman@ucsd.edu

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