

# Fighting for Proton Therapy

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## Meet Randy Montgomery

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Sometimes, having nothing to lose can help you find a way to win. For me, that strange turn of events happened after I was diagnosed with oral cancer. My doctors at MD Anderson told me I was a prime candidate for proton therapy treatment, which would not only get rid of my tumor, but also preserve healthy tissues and organs in my head and neck.

The doctors also told me that my insurer, Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), would likely deny me the treatment, and that I should be prepared to appeal their decision. They were right about that, and I wound up fighting three rounds of dragged-out appeals and still coming out on the losing side. Hesitant to delay treatment any longer, I opted to delay the fight with my insurer and pay out of pocket, knowing that decision would likely mean mortgaging my home.

I had reached out to the Texas Department of Insurance for help and they informed me their Enforcement Division was getting involved. To my surprise,

**“Part of the reason I went public is so that other patients won’t have to endure the denials process I did.”**

**—Randy Montgomery**

BCBS began sending MD Anderson reimbursement payments. Several months later, I opened the mailbox and found 27 letters from Blue Cross, stating that payment had been made in error and that I must reimburse them for all funds they’d spent on my proton therapy.

At that point, my hesitation about rocking the boat disappeared. I had nothing to lose in taking my story to the media.



I also felt strongly that — despite the denials — proton therapy was my best treatment option and BCBS should pay for it. That’s when I reached out to Molly at the Alliance for Proton Therapy Access to ask for guidance on how to go public. Molly and her team were with me every step of the way.

Throughout this whole process, I was recuperating. I kept thinking to myself how glad I was I’d made the choice I did. That motivated me to speak to reporters for a local news story and write an op-ed for a major newspaper. I believe that op-ed was a turning point. Two days after it ran, I got a voicemail from BCBS, stating that my inquiry with the Texas Department of Insurance had convinced them to cease recouping funds.

It was such an emotional moment to have that monetary load taken off our shoulders. When I was first diagnosed with cancer, I knew I had a fight on my hands. But nothing could have prepared me for the fight with my insurer. I feel like all cancer patients should be entitled to their doctor-recommended treatment and fair, timely, and transparent decisions from their insurers.