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The Power Of Storytelling: Bringing Hope To Cancer Patients



After exhausting potential treatments, including surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, many late-stage kidney and skin cancer patients lose hope in finding a cure.

Chiron, a leader in the biotech field, wanted to raise public awareness in the United States for its PROLEUKIN IL-2

therapy for the treatment of metastatic melanoma (skin cancer) and renal cell carcinoma (kidney cancer). Since its approval by the FDA for use in treating kidney cancer in 1992, and in 1998 for skin cancer, studies have demonstrated that PROLEUKIN IL-2 offers the possibility of a complete and long-lasting remission in some patients. It works by activating the immune system to recognize and eliminate certain kinds of cancer cells.

J. Stokes & Associates created a market-by-market campaign that featured patient treatment success stories.

Beginning in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the team secured both broadcast and print media coverage in select regions where the treatment is offered. This “dissemination of hope” helped ensure that other cancer patients would not only see living proof of a chance for survival, but an opportunity to regain their lives.

The campaign helped educate potential patients, their families and other important patient influencers about the treatment option and encouraged them to ask their current health care providers whether it was a good fit.

“Cancer took my life for two years but PROLEUKIN gave me the rest of it back. I’m 47 years old and today I’m at my best,” declares Diana Ligon, renal cell carcinoma survivor, in one of many inspiring success stories posted on the PROLEUKIN (www.proleukin.com) website.

In another, melanoma survivor John Carnett said: “I’m able to do everything now that I was able to do before the treatment, including walk three miles every day... My wife and I just returned from a 17-day trip to Italy... For our next trips, we’re thinking about getting those last four states in... Wherever life takes us.”

Chiron identified J. Stokes & Associates to head the campaign because of the agency’s strong background in innovative, consumer-focused public relations campaigns for national brands in regional markets. “There are always nuances and specific requirements when approaching local

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markets,” said Dan Stokes, executive vice president for J. Stokes & Associates. “The ability to focus at the community level is critical for success.”

The J. Stokes team timed its pitches to the media for maximum advantage. “We always took the availability of the media, the physician, and the patient into consideration to help Chiron get the best coverage possible,” said Stokes. “With good planning we were able to obtain coverage in multiple dayparts on most network affiliates.”

Dr. Gerald Miletello is Chief of Oncology at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Cancer Center, one of only 50 medical centers in the country that currently provide the treatment. “We got great feedback over the course of the campaign in the form of calls from all over Louisiana,” he said. “It’s the patients who are making the referrals, which is the really exciting part.”

Dr. Miletello said the center’s **calls increased by 20 percent** during the 90-day campaign, and the majority of the callers said it was the first time they had heard of the treatment. **Approximately 80 percent of the calls resulted in bringing new, treatable patients into the center.**

“I was extremely impressed at the drive and organization of the J. Stokes team,” Miletello said. “They did a great job getting the attention of the media.”

“So much of PR is plain, hard work and persistence,” said Stokes. “It’s about knowing what the media wants and responding to their needs.”

Chiron, encouraged by the response it has seen in the Baton Rouge market, will continue to expand this campaign in select cities throughout the United States.

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