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for Glioblastoma Brain Cancer Research

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Local Advocate for Brain Cancer Patients to Testify Before FDA on New Electric Fields Treatment

Only 3 brain cancer treatments approved by FDA in past 35 years

SEATTLE – It was the same type of brain cancer that took the life of Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy, and her husband, Chris Elliott. Now national patient advocate, Dellann Elliott, president and CEO of the Seattle-based Chris Elliott Fund, plans to ask the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve a new device using electric fields called NovoTTF developed by NovoCure, Ltd. Elliott is scheduled to testify before the Neurological Devices Panel of the Medical Devices Advisory Committee to the FDA Thurs., March 17th in Washington, D.C.

Elliott's work through the Chris Elliott Fund focuses on glioblastoma (GBM) – the deadliest form of brain cancer. More than 22,000 Americans are diagnosed with a malignant brain cancer every year. It is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for children under 19. About 60 to 70 percent of these cancers are GBM with a life expectancy after diagnosis of 12 to 14 months.

"This type of brain cancer is the death sentence of our time like what HIV was 30 years ago, but it doesn't have to be that way," says Elliott, "the fact that it is incurable today, does not mean that it is not treatable. While HIV is not curable, it is manageable and patients are living longer and healthier lives with aggressive treatment. This is the hope that we want patients diagnosed with glioblastoma to know and experience."

Clinical trials for NovoCure's NovoTTF include patients at the Ben and Catherine Ivy Center for Advanced Brain Tumor Treatment at the Swedish Neuroscience Institute in Seattle. The Chris Elliott Fund works closely with the Ivy Center and funds their Integrated Patient Support Program.

Dr. Greg Foltz, neurosurgeon and director of the Ivy Center, says Elliott has changed the way brain cancer patients are treated in Washington state. "Through patient advocacy within the medical community and patient education, more people are getting access to advanced treatments. She understands that you have to fight this disease from every angle," Foltz says.

Elliott added that with so few advanced treatments available most patients go through 1 to 2 years of standard treatment and are not treated at a brain tumor center recognized for its excellence. "Too often the most common prognosis for a GBM patient and their family is 'there is nothing more we can do," says Elliott. "I hear from patients all over the world that all they want is to have their survival optimized. Access to cutting-edge treatments like NovoCure's device, NovoTTF, creates hope and adds treatment options – it's about buying more time to find a cure."

Harvard University honored Elliott in 2008 with the National Patient Advocate award in recognition of her extensive work in promoting advanced treatment for GBM patients and public awareness about the disease.

"What we have found is that every brain tumor is unique in many ways and that standard treatment can't address these issues for the patient," says Elliott. "Our goal is to make sure that every brain cancer patient knows that they can access advanced treatments and get genetic testing of their tumor to better optimize their chances of beating this disease."

Jean Smart, Emmy award-winning actress and national celebrity spokesperson for CEF, says, "Dellann is a strong advocate for patients and is taking the national lead to make new treatments available for ALL brain cancer patients." Smart, whose sister died of GBM in January 2010, has been an active board member for CEF since 2009. "Since my sister's diagnosis, I have made it a priority to battle this disease with passion and wage war on brain cancer," Smart says.

Elliott lost her husband, Chris, in 2002 after a 2-year battle with GBM. He was 41. "It was unacceptable to us that there were so few treatments available. We vowed to make sure other people and their loved ones facing this disease would have more options and more hope," Elliott says.

Three weeks before Chris died, they founded the Chris Elliott Fund (CEF) for Glioblastoma Brain Cancer Research in May 2002.

Since 2002, CEF has raised over $1 million for brain cancer research and is recognized as a national model for patient advocacy. CEF funds groundbreaking research at the Christopher S. Elliott Neuro-oncology Lab for Glioblastoma Brain Research and Applied Science Center at the Dana-Faber Cancer Institute in Boston, Mass., and the Integrated Patient Support Program at the Ben and Catherine Ivy Center for Advanced Brain Tumor Treatment in Seattle's Swedish Neuroscience Institute.
http://chriselliottfund.org

Key Links:
US Food and Drug Administration Panel Agenda
http://www.fda.gov/AdvisoryCommittees/Calendar/ucm242408.htm

Seattle's Ben and Catherine Ivy Center for Advanced Brain Tumor Treatment
http://www.swedish.org/Services/Neuroscience-Institute/Neuroscience-Services/Ivy-Center-for-Advanced-Brain-Tumor-Treatment/Advanced-Brain-Tumor-Treatment-Research

NovoCure Information
http://www.novocuretrial.com/trial.html