

Healthline with Yale Cancer Center

Hosts

Edward Chu, MD Chief of Medical Oncology

Kenneth Miller, MD Director of Supportive Care

WTIC Newstalk 1080

Coast to Coast: A Run for Cancer Survivorship

Guest Expert: Christian McEvoy



Healthline with Yale Cancer Center is a weekly broadcast on WTIC Newstalk 1080

Sunday Mornings at 8:30

Listen live online at www.wtic.com or

Listen to archived podcasts at www.yalecancercenter.org

This is Healthline, a joint venture of WTIC NewsTalk 1080 and Yale Cancer Center. Yale Cancer Center is a resource for cancer programs throughout Connecticut, developing new advances in prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment. On Healthline, you will hear from some of the leading doctors in the country. Healthline is not intended to provide medical advice. Yale Cancer Center urges you to consult with a qualified physician in your community for diagnosis and for answers to your medical questions. And now, our co-hosts, oncologists, Ken Miller and Ed Chu.

Miller Good morning and welcome to Healthline. My name is Dr. Ken Miller and I am the Director of the Survivorship Program at the Yale Cancer Center in New Haven. I am here in the WTIC studios with my colleague and co-host Dr. Ed Chu, Chief of Medical Oncology at the Yale Cancer Center. Good morning Ed.

Chu Good morning Ken. Healthline, with the Yale Cancer Center, is our way of providing you with the most up-to-date information on cancer care every Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m.

Miller Each week, Ed and I are joined by a different expert from the Yale Cancer Center, or a member of our community, to discuss the latest information about cancer. Our goal is to give you help by sharing the latest information, and also to give you hope. If you would like to submit questions to us at Healthline, please e-mail us at healthline@yale.edu or call 1-888-234-4YCC. If you are interested in listening to past editions of Healthline, or if you would like to learn more about a specific kind of cancer, all of our shows are now posted in audio and written format on the Yale Cancer Center website, www.yalecancercenter.org.

Chu Today we are delighted to have as our very special guest, Christian McEvoy. Christian is, as you will hear in a very short while, simply an amazing individual and athlete who recently completed a 3400-mile run across the country. That's right, 3400 miles across the United States. Christian, thank you so much for being with us today on Healthline.

McEvoy Thank you for having me. I am excited to be here.

Miller Christian, could you explain to our listening audience what the Coast to Coast: A Run for Survivorship is all about?

McEvoy I ran from San Francisco to Rhode Island to raise awareness of the issues facing cancer survivors. Along the way we raised funds for the Yale Cancer Center and other cancer survivorship organizations. It was a cross-country adventure. I ran with a team of individuals that supported me along the way and a film crew making a documentary about cancer survivorship and raising awareness. It was really an amazing experience, and it has been the honor of a lifetime.

- Chu Christian, on behalf of the Yale Cancer Center, we want to thank you for your spirit and dedication to cancer survivorship, and also to the Cancer Center. How did you become interested in this whole process? What motivated you to take this run across the country?
- McEvoy It was something very simple. My friend's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and I saw how it not only changed her life, but how it changed my friend's life as well. He was not the one diagnosed, but all of a sudden his whole world was changed because of his mom's diagnosis. It hit me that, wow, this is much bigger than just a single disease, and there is something much more here than just medical care. Becoming more interested, I got involved in a bike ride for cancer survivors called the Connecticut Challenge. Everyone here in Connecticut knows that it is an amazing ride. The man who organizes it, Jeff Keith, actually ran across the country himself in 1984. Meeting him, I was inspired to do even more and to start my own non-profit organization, and try to be the best I could be for this cause. As I traveled across the country and met survivors everyday and heard new survivorship stories, I became even more committed to the cause because I learned more about the range of needs across the country and how important this is, and how we need to be paying attention.
- Miller So, some of the inspiration was from your own experience with a very close friend, and some of it was from the Connecticut Challenge as well. The idea of actually running 3400 miles is pretty amazing. Let me ask you about your background as an athlete. You have been a runner, but tell us a little more about yourself.
- McEvoy My mother would tell you that I have always had an energy problem without depletion issues. So yeah, I have always been an athlete. I have always been a runner, played baseball, swam in college, and then a triathlete. There is no way to prepare for running across the country, and my mother would also tell you that I usually get into things over my head. The water was well over my head when running across the country. The fact that I made it across the country was due in part to luck, but mainly because I had a great team with me. My athletic background was certainly helpful in the run, but it really had to do with the spirit of the team who kept me comfortable and healthy across the country. It had to do with the spirit of survivorship that I feel infused with, like I had the heart of 11 million cancer survivors saying that this is something they need, and that kept me moving. Surely there is an athletic side to it, but I think it is more about a story of heart and a story where I was given the opportunity to accomplish a dream for other people, spurred on by their spirit.
- Chu Did you have to do anything special to train and prepare for doing this run?
- McEvoy I trained to be an ultradistance marathoner. I ran a lot of miles before I started. I did a lot of strength training, and then I trained on the road. One thing we did was that for the first half of the country from California really to Kansas, we decided as a team to keep my mileage relatively low, averaging a little less than 20 miles a day.
- Chu For our listeners, that is basically running a marathon every day.

- McEvoy The idea for the second half of the country, as I was fitter and stronger and able to run more, was to make up the miles. I would average about 22 to 24 miles a day by the end, and at times I would run 40 and 45 miles a day. This was an effort to save my legs in the beginning, get them a little stronger, and then if I became very tired towards the end, I could always crawl home.
- Miller I was there on the day you ended the run, and there was no crawling involved. I will never forget the scene. Christian's finished the last 26 miles of the run and literally ran into the Atlantic Ocean. Can you tell us about that moment?
- McEvoy It was a very emotional moment. We had a certified marathon in Rhode Island, where we had 300 people running with me as a fund raiser and awareness raiser. I was going to finish at the beach and then jump in the Atlantic Ocean because I had started in the Pacific Ocean. As I was running up, the documentary team was in a car in front of me filming, I had a microphone on, and they were asking me questions. My good friend Bob Ford was next to me and I kept seeing the ocean through the neighborhood. As I got closer, I was tearing up because it was very emotional to be that close and think, this is 6 months of my life that I spent running everyday, and we are finally here. When I got to the ocean everyone asked if I was going to jump in and I thought, man that is going to be really cold in December. I was kind of dreading it, but I got up there and said you know what, I am going to get only one chance for this, so I ran up and did a back flop into the ocean. I did not even feel cold. I was so happy to have been able to accomplish this, and I was so honored that so many people cared that I had gone through it. It was special to be there and be on the beach; it was just a really great feeling. You were there, and the mood of the day was amazing!
- Miller Absolutely. I expected you would get out of the water and you would be shivering cold, but you did not miss a beat. People had questions for you and you were talking about survivorship and the cause, which was awesome.
- McEvoy One thing that our team learned is that the cancer survivorship community is a very new idea to many people, and the idea of cancer survivorship is a new idea. So, one of our missions is to raise awareness. I was a little cold once I got out into the air, but there was a camera there, and while I am not personally incredibly comfortable in front of a camera, one thing I learned is that people want to talk to me and they are listening. This run is a way to draw attention to something much bigger than me and much bigger than this run; the 11 million cancer survivors across the country. So I try to never miss that opportunity, and I was glad they were there. I walked up and knew that people were going to watch this on TV. Immediately we were talking about survivorship, and I was really pleased about that.
- Miller We would like to remind you to e-mail your questions to healthline@yale.edu. We are going to take a short break for a medical minute. Please stay tuned to learn more information about Coast to Coast: A Run for Survivorship and about our guest, Christian McEvoy.

Medical Minute

It is estimated that over two million men in the US are currently living with prostate cancer. One in six American men will develop prostate cancer in the course of his lifetime. Yet major advances in the detection and treatment of prostate cancer have dramatically decreased the number of men who die from the disease. New treatment options now provide hope for all men diagnosed with prostate cancer. Screening for prostate cancer can be performed quickly and easily in a physician's office using 2 simple tests, a physical exam and a blood test. With screening, early detection, and a healthy life style, prostate cancer can be defeated. Clinical trials are currently underway at Yale Cancer Center, Connecticut's only federally designated comprehensive cancer center to test innovative new treatments for prostate cancer. Patients enrolled in these trials are given access to experimental medicines, which have not yet been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

This has been a medical minute, brought to you as a public service by Yale Cancer Center. For more information, visit our website at yalecancercenter.org.

Miller Welcome back to Healthline. This is Dr. Ken Miller. I am here with Dr. Ed Chu and our guest, Christian McEvoy, who is an amazing supporter of cancer survivorship and of the Yale Cancer Center. Christian, I've been wondering, what do people ask you when they see you out there running?

McEvoy There were a few funny questions such as, "So are you Forrest Gump?" That was by far the comment I received the most. People asked me, "Why are you running?" This gave me a great opportunity to talk about survivorship. I was also asked how many pairs of shoes I went through and if I was crazy.

Chu How many pairs of sneakers did you go through?

McEvoy I went through all 33 pairs that ASICS provided me.

Chu So you weren't left with any to spare?

McEvoy No, they sent me 33 and I went through all of them. Anybody who is a parent, especially a mom, would say "What does your mom think of this?" She is proud, but there are few things that are as nerve-racking as having your son running a marathon a day across the country and not being able to control what will happen. My mom is really a saint for dealing with it.

Chu So on a day-to-day basis you would be running and you would have your support team there behind you?

McEvoy We would do sort of a leap frogging situation where I would run 4 to 7 miles and the team would drive the SUV vehicle up to the next turn, or to the mile marker, and wait. I would jump into the RV and get a drink of water and keep on running. There weren't any typical days on the road because we

had a documentary film crew with us filming and interviewing survivors across the country and sometimes they were with us and sometimes they weren't. There were over 700 high school students that ran with me at different times. Part of that is due to work done in advance; going to the high schools, meeting the kids, telling them about what is coming, and planning these events. There was always a constant search on the team's side to find internet access because a lot of what we did was internet research and sending e-mails. They would stop at a café and I would keep running and maybe someone would get out on a bike with me.

The big question that I got asked was what a typical day was like. There was no typical day. Every day was an adventure, and that is what made it so much fun. Everyone says how wonderful we are for doing this, but it is also important to remember that this was not only the honor of lifetime to run for such an important cause, but also the experience of a lifetime. It was a lot of fun; a ton of fun. I am 24 and I was the oldest of the whole crew. I was out there on the road for 6 months with my best friends; it does not get any better than that.

- Chu No it doesn't, and plus, you got a chance to really see the country in all of its beauty, and it really is a beautiful country.
- McEvoy It's amazing. We saw it at 25 miles a day and for people who drive across the country, they might blow through the little towns. We got to meet people, we shook hands. We have e-mail addresses and phone numbers for people all across the country, and I feel like I now have several hundred homes across the country. Our country is an amazingly generous and hospitable place. Sometimes I think people overlook or forget that. In a sense, this trip restored my faith in humanity, which sounds kind of cliché, but there are amazing people out there and you find them everyday, in every town and every city.
- Miller Christian, you met a large number of survivors. Any stories that you remember particularly well that you are going to carry with you and you want to share?
- McEvoy Sure. Cathy Wainwright was a huge inspiration. I met her just outside San Francisco. She is a 6-year breast cancer survivor and is still undergoing treatment. She has got kids, an amazing husband, and just an amazing support network. She has an amazing outlook on the disease itself, and she says, "I don't have time for cancer." Even though her cancer is effectively terminal, she is not willing to submit, and she does not want her life to change. She does not want to miss the moments she still has, and that was incredibly inspiring to me. It caused me to look at myself and ask; what do I hold as important? What does Cathy hold as important that is the reason she is smiling all the time? It seemed to me that she didn't have a whole lot of reasons to smile sometimes, but she was always smiling. It got to me that maybe I can learn something from her, and in one sense this is selfish, that I took something from her, but she was an incredibly inspiring person and became a friend.
- Then there is Chris Walsh from Fairfield, Connecticut. He also has kids and an amazing support network. One of the big things that struck me about him was that he couldn't do what he wanted to do anymore. He couldn't be out doing what I was doing, and he missed that the most after his

treatment. It hit me that one of the important things about survivorship care is allowing survivors to continue their lives and be who they are. When survivors identities are stripped from them, that is the hardest part. For them the hardest part wasn't the chemo or any of the physical aspects, it was realizing that they cannot do some of the things they once were able to do; the things that made them who they are.

Miller As you know, my wife had cancer 7 years ago. Joan is a runner and a bike rider, a mother, and a wife, but she also is a cancer survivor. Your point is very well taken that you want people to be able to be who they are.

McEvoy Exactly. Cancer to me, before I started this run, was a disease that the patient got, and what I understand now is that there are more lives that are changed and it is impossible to group them into categories because each life will be changed in a different way. The care of the whole person seems to be incredibly important, and that is what struck me. As I realized this, and I met these survivors, I stopped hearing about cancer and I started hearing about their lives; cancer became a blip on the radar screen. I heard about how it affected them now as to what they could and could no longer do. It's almost like an injury to an athlete; it changed the way they had to play the game and that was really upsetting. This is a part of my ongoing mission now. I would like to find a way to help alleviate some of that for as many people as possible.

Miller We are going to take a short break. I want to remind you that you can e-mail your questions to us, and to Christian McEvoy, at healthline@yale.edu. We are going to take a short break to listen to a survivor's story.

Survivor Story

A few years ago the diagnosis of cancer was a death sentence for many patients, but today, thanks to advances in clinical research, we are turning the corner in the battle against cancer. There are over 10 million cancer survivors now living in the U.S. They are the true heroes in the war against cancer. Here is the story of a hero from Hamden.

Ten years ago, when I was diagnosed with aplastic anemia, there was no cure. After teaching math for 35 years, I was forced to retire. Then I met Dr. Tom Duffy at the Yale Cancer Center. He told me about a new procedure called a mini stem cell transplant. He encouraged me to put my life in the hands of Dr. Stuart Seropian, one of the few doctor in the country doing this procedure. On January 17, 2004, I had a stem cell transplant at the Yale Cancer Center. At age 70, I feel like a new man. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the terrific staff at Yale Cancer Center. They literally saved my life.

This survivor's story has been brought to you by Yale Cancer Center.

- Miller Welcome back to Healthline. This Dr. Ken Miller, and I am here with my co-host Dr. Ed Chu, and our guest, Christian McEvoy. Christian, I am going to start out with an e-mail question that we received for you. The question is, in the 3400 miles you ran, approximately how many steps is that?
- McEvoy We calculated it out and it is approximately 10 million steps. Across the country we were saying there are 10 million American cancer survivors roughly, so it is nice to think there were 10,000,000 steps, but my steps shortened as I got across the country, so who knows.
- Miller As you know, a number of the faculty decided to donate a certain amount per mile. The more you ran, the more it was. Were you ever tempted to keep running and run back across the other way?
- McEvoy I thought about it more than once. It was the experience of a lifetime, and who would want that to end? But what was special about this was that it was a finite amount of time, and then it could not go on forever. It was great; I am still running now in a sense.
- Chu In the last segment you mentioned that you had a film crew as part of your support team, and there is a documentary film that is chronicling your journey and filming cancer survivors across the country. Could you tell us more about that?
- McEvoy The film is not about me, and it is not about my run. The run was an opportunity to have this film crew on the road with us for 6 months. The two filmmakers filmed almost a hundred hours of interviews with cancer survivors all across the country. There were different types of cancer and different stages of survivorship from newly diagnosed, to 25 years out. They are making a film, a 60-minute documentary film, about cancer survivors. The idea is to raise awareness of the issues facing survivors. The filmmakers, Leslie Eastel and Kristen Coleman, are now working at Fairfield University to put this film together. It is going to be a pretty amazing thing when it is done. It is something to look forward to in the summer of 2007.
- Miller Who do you want to share the film with?
- McEvoy The key to raising awareness for any issue is trying to get it into as many hands as possible. I think that this is something that many people will identify with and will be interested in, because everyone is affected by cancer. Nothing like this has been done before. I have never seen interviews from across the country with people talking about their lives in relation to cancer. They are talking about their diagnosis as a blip on the screen. Here is what I did before, here is my diagnosis, here are the medical aspects of my diagnosis, but then here is how my life has changed afterwards. I think that is a really interesting thing. Leslie and Kristen are excited to put this film together, and they are doing a great job. I have seen a lot of footage and it is amazing. It is in high definition so it's absolutely gorgeous.

- Chu We look forward to seeing it. It sounds like it will be a very powerful experience to observe. One of the things that you touched on is that cancer affects not only the individual who is diagnosed, but all of the family members and the caregivers. We've talked about this issue on previous shows relating to cancers survivorship, and how Ken had an integral role in establishing our Survivorship Program here at the Yale Cancer Center. It is estimated, and correct me if I am wrong, that three out of every four individuals in the United States could be considered a cancer survivor, because in some way they are all touched by cancer as a disease.
- McEvoy Yes, that is true. We found in speaking with survivors that they immediately go to their team, their caregivers and support network and say, this is how it changed my life, this is how it changed our family life, my work life, my social life, and really focus on those individuals that were an integral part of their cancer survivorship experience. This is a very powerful thing because we live and die with our loved ones, and when they have issues and problems, it is almost like it is happening to us.
- Chu Thinking about your career as a teacher, this sounds like a wonderful opportunity for you to teach about cancer survivorship based on what survivors along the way taught you.
- McEvoy I think 'teach' is a tough word, because it connotes something a little different. It is definitely an opportunity for me to share what I have learned through my experiences, which is a goal of mine with the film. I am going to be speaking about my experiences but I don't have all the answers. I can tell people about what I have seen and the awesome experience I have had and say, let's work together. That's what the community needs, that's why the Yale Cancer Center and the Survivorship Program are so ideal. The attitude around this whole program is, let's work together, let's put the best minds in the same room and have a conversation about how we can make this a better experience.
- Chu A lot of our development as people occurs when we are younger, but it sounds like there is also a lot of growth that occurs after a tough experience like cancer. Is that what you found?
- McEvoy I think a survivor changes immensely; that diagnosis changes them. I've asked survivors, if they had it to do over again, would they chose not to have cancer? I cannot remember somebody who said they would not have had cancer. They say that cancer was tough, but that it changed them and it made them a better person, and it is part of them now. That is an amazingly powerful sentiment, and I am not so sure I have completely internalized it yet to understand what it means.
- Chu Christian, how has this whole experience changed you as an individual and your whole outlook on life?
- McEvoy It certainly made me more appreciative. I spent a lot of time running across the country and searching for something in the world, but what I have realized is that some of the best things in my

life are right at home - my family and friends, and I have learned to appreciate them and my support network much more. I have also learned that I have a lot more to learn. It seems very simple, but with the survivors I have met, each experience is unique. There is absolutely no way for me to know everything, and so, I have learned to take each individual as they are and treat them as an individual.

Miller You have done an awesome thing. You raised \$235,000 through your efforts, which is truly amazing. What is your goal for the money you raised?

McEvoy To help survivors. It is really that simple. One thing I said as I ran across the country is that I am not a doctor or a professional. All I can do is run, and I am looking to turn the money over to people who know the good that can be done.

Miller In closing, I would like to thank Christian McEvoy for being with us today on Healthline. We encourage you to send any questions to healthline@yale.edu or call 1-888-234-4YCC. Remember to tune into WTIC New Talk 1080 every Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m. for Healthline with the Yale Cancer Center.

Chu Christian, it has been great having you. On behalf of the Yale Cancer Center, I would like to thank you again for all your tremendous support. This is Ed Chu from the Yale Cancer Center wishing you a safe and healthy week.