

Transcript

Press Conference, Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter
Aug. 20, 2015, The Carter Center, Atlanta, Ga.

Pres. Carter: Well, thank you all for coming this morning.

Dr. Juan Sarmiento is the doctor at Emory that did the surgery on my liver. Dr. David Lawson is a specialist on melanoma. Dr. Curran, who's here, is a specialist on radiation treatment, and he's in charge of Winship Cancer Center. They're working very closely with other cancer centers around this nation—in particular, the MD Anderson Center in Houston, Texas, National Cancer Institute, Sloan Kettering, and others. I've had a lot of people call and recommend different places, and I referred those offers of help to the doctors, who have reached out to get acquiescence or approval of what they've decided to do in my treatment.

For a number of years, Rosalynn and I have planned on dramatically reducing our work at The Carter Center, but haven't done it yet. We thought about this when I was 80 years old, and again when I was 85. We thought about it again when I was 90. And so, this is a propitious time, I think, for us finally to carry out our long-delayed plans; so I'm going to cut back fairly dramatically on my obligations at Emory and at The Carter Center. As you know, The Carter Center has a full legal partnership with Emory. Half of our trustees are selected by Emory, and we approve them, and vice versa. The president of Emory University is on our board of trustees, as are Rosalynn and I, and we have built up a fairly substantial endowment to tide The Carter Center over when I'm not any longer able to raise funds, and we have now a little over \$600 million in our endowment. But I'll continue to sign letters requesting contributions and make key calls to people who might be prospects, so I'll continue to help with the funding. The trustee meetings are held at The Carter Center, and I'll continue to attend those. And I'd like also to schedule the regular meetings with our fellows and directors, as they give detailed reports quite regularly on what we are doing with the fight against Guinea worm and with our peace programs and other health programs, and so forth. So I'll continue to do that.

I can't really anticipate how I'll be feeling, obviously, but I'll have to defer quite substantially to my doctors in charge of the treatment. I understand that there will be the one radiation treatment and also four injections at three-week intervals, then they'll stop and take a look at what the results might have been, and I'll adhere to that schedule as much as possible. *(The description of the treatment frequencies was edited to clarify the original remarks.)*

The Carter Center is well prepared to continue without any handicap if Rosalynn and I do back away from a lot of the activities that we've been doing. The board of trustees decided last March that our grandson Jason Carter would take over as the chairman of the board, replacing Oz Nelson, which was Nelson's suggestion, to be effective at our meeting in November. So Jason will be the chairman of the Carter Center's board of trustees, which is a body that makes the ultimate decisions about what projects the Center works on and budget matters and things of that kind. And then, of course, if he wants me to give him advice, I'll be delighted to do it, as I've done with some other people in the past. I was the

chairman for a while, but I stepped down a number of years ago to give other people a chance to work on it.

this morning. I think that's probably the best night's sleep I've had in many years. So I feel at ease, and I have been very lucky that the Emory doctors have been able to control any aspects of pain from the operation or from the presence of cancer.

Q: Mr. President, Tom Jones from WSB-TV. You mentioned all the well-wishers. Has there been any one correspondence or call that really touched you?

Pres. Carter: Well, both of the former presidents Bush called me at one time, and then George H.W. Bush, Bush Sr., called me again yesterday afternoon. I think I appreciated that very much, and their wives were there on the telephone with them. President Obama called, Vice President Biden called. Bill Clinton called, Hillary Clinton called, Secretary of State Kerry called—the first time they've a

But The Carter Center has a completely different approach. We deal with individual people in the smallest and most obscure and suffering villages—in the deserts and in the jungles of Africa. We've had programs in 80 different countries for the poorest and most destitute people in the world. And that has been, I'd say, far more gratifying personally, because we actually interact with families and with people who are going blind or who have lymphatic filariasis, which is elephantiasis, or who have Guinea worm and so forth. G

system—they make your immune system more active—and so that’s a basic approach, and there are several of these medicines.

Q: So the message to other patients? Is your message one of hope, is it acceptance?

Pres. Carter: It’s one of hope and acceptance, yes—hope for the best and accept what comes, you know. I think I have been as blessed as any human being in the world, having become the president of the United States of America and governor of Georgia, the work at The Carter Center, a big and growing family, thousands of friends, and living to—I’ll be 91 years old the 1st of October—everything has been a blessing for me, so I’m thankful and hopeful.

Q: President Carter, Kane Farabaugh with Voice of America.

Pres. Carter: Hi Kane.

Q: I wanted to ask, what has been—you said that you’ve sort of taken a pragmatic approach to the treatment and to the news—but what has been the most difficult part about the news for you in the past couple of weeks?

Pres. Carter: Well, I haven’t had any difficult treatment aspect yet. You know, the liver surgery was fairly extensive. They removed about one-tenth of my liver, I understand. But it healed up quickly, and I had minimal pain. I had the first of the four drug treatments yesterday, to be followed this afternoon by the radiation treatment, and then by the remaining immunotherapy treatments every three weeks, and then it will recess. So I haven’t had any unpleasantness yet. *(The description of the treatment frequencies was edited to clarify the original remarks.)*

Q: Is it difficult to step away from all of the busy activities?

Pres. Carter: That’s a bad part. I really wanted to go to Nepal to build houses. This would have been our 33rd year of going without fail, and I was very hopeful about that. But if it interrupts the treatment regimen, then I think I need to get the treatment.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Hello, President Carter. Karyn Greer, CBS46 News, and just wondering. You touched upon it a little bit. In your illustrious career, as you said—governor here, president, even as husband, father, grandfather

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what kind it was, didn't say it was melanoma. I didn't say it had spread to my brain; I just said to other parts of my body. So as quickly as I could, I've told the public and my family the things about which I was absolutely certain, rather than just guessing what might happen. (*This section was edited slightly to clarify the sequence of press statements.*)

Q: President Carter, thank you. Sanjay Gupta with CNN.

Pres. Carter: Yeah, I know.

[Laughter]

Pres. Carter: I've been taking all these other questions so I could get to you, Sanjay.

Q: I have a couple of questions, a little bit more specific, about the medical aspects. You became ill, you said, in May and came back early to the United States.

Pres. Carter: Yeah.

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Pres. Carter: Thank you all very much for coming. I appreciate it. I don't know if we—Dr. Curran, do you want to add anything or...? If you have any particular questions, Dr. Curran can correct my mistakes.

Okay, I'm leaving. Thank you all very much.

[Applause]