

# UW Health: Uses creative solution for skin cancer treatment during COVID-19

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**MADISON, Wis.** - UW Health is finding collaborative and creative solutions to quickly reschedule 630 skin cancer surgeries that were postponed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, including for retired UW Madison athletic director Pat Richter.

Skin cancer is very often treated with Mohs surgery, a precise surgical procedure for certain skin cancers. It has three elements - removal, analysis and repair. A Mohs surgeon begins by cutting out a patient's visible skin cancer along with a small margin of surrounding skin. Then that skin sample is examined under a microscope. This process continues until there are no more cancer cells, then the Mohs surgeon repairs the wound. The process is quick and has a high cure rate. It was also developed and refined by University of Wisconsin physician and surgeon Frederic Mohs in the 1930s.

Due to the many changes related to COVID-19, UW Health needed to adjust how they approached Mohs surgery. To accommodate for physical distancing and quickly address hundreds of postponed and new surgery referrals, several changes took place:

- Surgeries were consolidated from three locations to one.
- Patients waited in private rooms instead of a waiting room to accommodate physical distancing.
- Mohs surgeons partnered with ENT, oncoplastic and plastic surgeons to perform the final part of the procedure - the repair and closure of skin cancer-affected areas.

These surgeons offering their time and expertise allowed Mohs surgeons to focus on removal and examination of tissue. This was very effective, allowing them to complete 20-30 surgeries per day, with postponed surgeries predicted to be complete by the end of June.

Pat Richter, the 78-year-old former Badger football great and UW Madison athletic director was one such patient. Recently, he was evaluated for cancerous spots around his face that would require Mohs surgery, but some of his procedures were postponed, so he experienced this care firsthand. Richter said the way they accommodated the surgery was terrific and his care team didn't lose sight of personal touches, even in these circumstances.

Ultimately, Mohs surgery will return to its original structure as UW Health continues to expand services, but this surgical collaboration will be a strategy they rely upon as needed. More from Dr. Aylward and Pat Richter in the [full story](#).

A UW Health Mohs surgeon is available for interviews from 9-10:30am. Video of the Mohs surgeon and Pat Richter is available upon request.