

St. Anthony's H.S. Athlete, Nicholas Polo, Makes Strong Recovery Following Brain Tumor Surgery

Thanks to Dr. John Grant, Nicholas Polo is now working out again, and hopes to soon get back into sports.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Wantagh teenager Nicholas Polo, a junior at St. Anthony's High School, South Huntington, comes from a proud family of athletes. His brother Vincent played football at Stony Brook University, and brother Anthony played at Hofstra. Nicholas' father Richard started the Wantagh Football Club, which all three sons played in, and owns a sporting goods distributorship. Nicholas has been involved in sports for years, and played as a safety on the St. Anthony's football team his freshman year. He has also played on travel baseball and Lacrosse teams.

In spring 2012, toward the end of his freshman year, Nicholas, then 15, started having intense headaches and neck pain while working out with his father, getting ready for the next football season. He thought it might be a disc problem or a pinched nerve. He started physical therapy, but his symptoms only got worse. He began to have vision and balance problems, and started throwing up. His parents took him to pediatric neurologist Vijaya Atluru, M.D., who ordered an MRI. The doctor discovered that Nicholas had a tumor in his pineal gland, a small endocrine gland in the center of the brain, and suspected hydrocephalus. Hydrocephalus, a dangerous accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain, can be caused by the presence of a brain tumor.

Dr. Atluru referred Nicholas to John A. Grant, M.D., F.A.C.S., attending [pediatric neurosurgeon](#) with Neurological Surgery, P.C.'s Pediatric Neurosurgery Center, and Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery, Winthrop University Hospital, who saw him in June 2012. [Dr. Grant](#) knew he would first have to address the hydrocephalus. He performed a procedure called [third ventriculostomy](#), which uses a small camera with fiber optic technology to view the surface of the ventricle (space) inside the brain, where the fluid accumulates. A small tool attached to the



same device makes a tiny hole in the floor of the third ventricle, which releases the built-up fluid.

Dr. Grant also extracted some of this fluid and tested it for tumor markers, to rule out a germinoma, which can only be treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy, and not surgery; the test determined that Nicholas did not have a germinoma. Based on these results, surgery was the appropriate treatment option. The doctor's next task was to remove the tumor.

The exact type of tumor could only be determined through a biopsy, performed after its removal. The biopsy showed that it was a mixed pineal tumor, with a combination of benign and malignant cells.

"This is a very complex surgery, as the tumor is located in the center of the brain," said Dr. Grant. Dr. Grant and his team took great care in the 12-hour operation to avoid any critical brain structures. Dr. Grant was guided by a stereotactic brain navigation system, a minimally invasive form of surgical intervention that uses three-dimensional coordinates to locate and operate on small targets inside the body.

Nicholas went through a number of rounds of chemotherapy and radiation therapy, which are now complete. He now gets regular MRIs to ensure that everything is OK.

"Nicholas is a real fighter," said Dr. Grant. "He bounced back rapidly."

When Nicholas first got sick, the assistant baseball coach at the University of Central Florida (UCF), whom Mr. Polo had coached as a youth in Wantagh, invited Nicholas to throw out the first pitch at a game the following season. Nicholas knew he had turned the corner when he threw a perfect "strike" in a UCF game against Tulane University.

"Dr. Grant is a great man," said Nicholas. "He saves lives."

"Thank God that Dr. Grant was available," said Nicholas' father, Richard. "He was also very responsive. He even gave me his cell phone number."

Nicholas is now working out again, and hopes to soon get back into sports. His experience and his admiration for Dr. Grant have also led him to consider a career in health care. "I think this was a sign from God that this is what I should do," he said. "I want to save lives like Dr. Grant."

Nicholas has a good prognosis, but will need continued close monitoring over time.

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