

# First in Arizona commercial use of new cancer therapy is successful for Phoenix woman at HonorHealth Research Institute

*Dr. Justin Moser's TIL (tumor infiltrating lymphocytes) therapy clearing up melanoma that had spread throughout the patient's body.*

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA, UNITED STATES, July 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For the first time in Arizona, a patient with extensive melanoma cancer was successfully treated outside a clinical trial at HonorHealth Research Institute with a new type of immunotherapy known as TIL (tumor infiltrating lymphocytes).



Within two days after receiving her TIL infusion, her tumors started shrinking, which is consistent with a quick, durable responses associated with TIL therapy.”  
*Dr. Justin Moser*

Melanoma is an aggressive cancer associated with melanin, the pigment that helps protect the body from excessive ultraviolet light, either from the sun or tanning beds. Melanin is what gives color to the eyes and skin. While melanoma may start on the skin, it often metastasizes, or spreads, to other parts of the body.

Three years ago, Tena Hughes, 54, a lifelong Phoenix resident, was about to board a plane for Uganda to fulfill a once-in-a-lifetime dream of seeing critically endangered mountain gorillas in the wilds of Africa. However, what at the time was a mandatory COVID test came back positive, and she was forced to stay home. She didn't know it at the time, but she would later attribute that test to saving her life.

Weeks later, Tena began suffering excruciating headaches. An exam in February 2021 showed she had several late-stage melanoma tumors that had spread from an unknown origin to her brain. Subsequent scans would show the cancer had also spread to her spleen and left lung. “I'd never seen it on my skin,” Tena noted.

Over the next three years, she had numerous surgeries, radiation treatments and anti-cancer drugs to rid herself of the melanoma. She did not tolerate the drug therapy well and had to discontinue it. Eventually, the cancer would return and continue to spread.

## Finding hope at the Research Institute

It was during lung surgery that Tena's doctor told her that if she didn't get on a comprehensive treatment plan, the cancer would continue to come back. The surgeon suggested Tena see [Dr. Justin Moser](#), a melanoma specialist conducting clinical trials at HonorHealth Research Institute.

"He (Dr. Moser) is the first doctor who gave me hope," said Tena, who underwent TIL treatment in June.

TILs are part of the body's natural immune system. They can recognize and fight specific tumors. Like tired soldiers, TIL cells can eventually weaken and begin losing the battle against the cancer. In TIL therapy, thousands of these cells are taken from a tumor. In a laboratory, they are enhanced and multiplied, creating millions of fortified immune cells that are then infused back into the patient, creating a resurgent "army" to fight the cancer.

## Melanoma tumors already shrinking

Almost instantly after the TIL treatment, Tena's tumors began shrinking.

"Tena tolerated treatment well," Dr. Moser said. "Within two days after receiving her TIL infusion, her tumors started shrinking, which is consistent with a quick, durable responses associated with TIL therapy."

Based on clinical trials conducted at the Research Institute, which led to FDA approval in February, Dr. Moser said, "We know responses to TIL can be durable, with roughly half of all responses lasting two years or more."

Tena's treatment was the first commercial use of TIL in Arizona, following the FDA's approval.

Interestingly, Tena has actually been waiting for TIL therapy for nearly three years. Soon after she was initially diagnosed, she scrambled to learn all she could about her disease, eventually discovering a book, *Life Force*, about potential futuristic medical cures, including TIL therapy.

"I just dog-eared every chapter in that book," she said. "I told myself, 'If I stay alive long enough, this is going to be available to me.' As fate would have it, it was."

## Planning a trip to Africa, but first ...

Tena, a mother of four sons who for years used her real estate license to buy, remodel and sell



Research Clinical Investigator,  
HonorHealth Research Institute

homes, said that she was told that if she had gone to Africa as she had originally planned, she might not have survived the trip.

Now, she is writing a book about her cancer journey, and because of the videos she's posted on social media about her disease and treatment, she was recently invited to a medical conference later this month in Boston.

"There's been so many reasons why I feel I have a purpose here. My future, the way I see it, is helping other people," Tena said. "I think that's where I've been called; to help other people (by sharing) how I chose to combat my cancer through exercise, nutrition and mindset."

Tena still wants to see gorillas, but first, she's going to Paris: "I have a burning desire to stay alive."

For more information about HonorHealth Research Institute cancer clinical trials, contact: 480-323-1350.

# # #

#### About the HonorHealth Research Institute

HonorHealth Research Institute is an international destination that is at the forefront of providing patients with a better quality of life through its clinical trials and innovative treatment options. Headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona, the institute's team of physicians and researchers collaborate with experts from across the nation to offer life-changing therapies, drugs and devices. At HonorHealth Research Institute, patients have access to tomorrow's health innovations, today. Learn more at: [HonorHealth.com/research](https://www.honorhealth.com/research).

Steve Yozwiak

HonorHealth Research Institute

+1 602-620-4749

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[YouTube](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/728966541>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

