

## Cop's ray of hope in fight with cancer

### Mt. Sinai's \$3M machine zaps tumors

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JUST A FEW years ago, cancer patients like Frank Macri were left with options that were few and grim.

The tumors pressing against the spine of the 51-year-old housing cop from Queens would require an invasive and potentially ineffective surgery to stem their growth and prevent the cancerous cells from putting him in a wheelchair the rest of his life.

Not any more.

Thanks to state-of-the-art technology at Mount Sinai Medical Center that projects a pinpoint beam of radiation at his tumors, Macri has been able to avoid a life marked by debilitating pain.

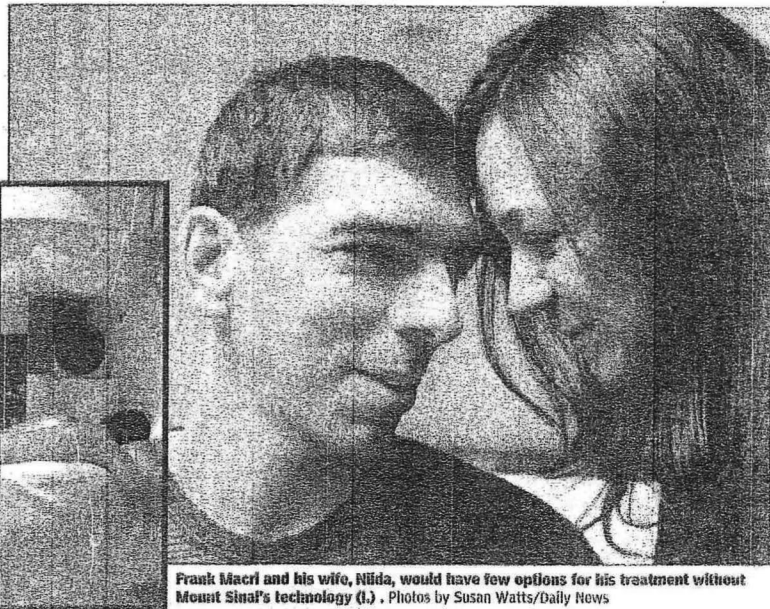
"Within a week, I was feeling so much less pain," he said of the rapid effects of his first treatment.

"It's a machine that I find it hard to believe every hospital doesn't have. What do people in my situation do?"

Before 2005, there was very little people suffering from spinal cancer could do — a consequence of the spinal cord's inability to withstand high amounts of radiation. But then the Novalis Shaped Beam Surgery System arrived at Mount Sinai, the only hospital in the city presently offering the technology, and patients like Macri had newfound hope.

The image-guided system delivers an extremely precise, high-dose beam of radiation that kills tumors wrapped around the spine or brain. More importantly, it doesn't destroy nearby tissue.

"That would result in the demise of the spinal cord," said Isabelle Germano, director of the ster-



Frank Macri and his wife, Niida, would have few options for his treatment without Mount Sinai's technology (l.). Photos by Susan Watts/Daily News

cotactic and tumor program at Mount Sinai.

Treatment with the \$3 million machine typically takes no longer than 40 minutes and is completely noninvasive. But it requires the work of up to 10 highly-trained specialists, including a physicist, neurosurgeon, radiation oncologist and computer expert.

When Macri, a fitness fanatic who moved to the city from Connecticut in 1983, returned to

Mount Sinai a couple of weeks ago to treat a second spinal tumor, the importance of all the specialists working together was clear.

As a nurse practitioner stared at four monitors showing separate X-rays and computer images taken of Macri's tumor, physicist Yeh-Chi Lo, radiation oncologist Sheryl Green and Germano flitted between the "operating" room and the computer bank. The procedure took nearly twice as long as expect-

ed — a result of a temporary glitch in one of the computers — but Macri left the hospital with wife Niida hopeful this treatment may allow him to return to the job he sorely misses.

"They've been able to give me hope," said Macri, who will still have to undergo bouts of chemotherapy. "The worst thing anyone in my situation wants to hear is they can't do anything."

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