

Soundbite Script – Rare Cancer Cuts Down Prominent Fashion Designer

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“Having a primary cancer of the heart is extremely rare. In this case a primary angiosarcoma, typically if they do occur, it’s on the right side of the heart in the right atrium. They, unfortunately, have a very poor prognosis. They are typically diagnosed at a later stage and it’s already spread. Even in cases when they’ve been diagnosed early, curing them is very difficult.”

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“Unexplained shortness of breath is probably the most common. Sometimes you have chest pains. It mimics typical heart problems and that’s where a cardiologist gets involved. Typically it’s found on an electrocardiogram or an ultrasound. Sometimes they’ll do CT MRI of the heart for it as well to get a better idea of where the mass is. The symptoms are non-specific in general.”

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“What this tells us is illness can happen at any age, whether it’s cancer or not. The take home point is as you get older you do want to have regular checkups. In our society we tend to once we leave our pediatrician we don’t find a primary care physician until we’re 50. That’s the reality. People get busy, people feel fine and that’s understandable. But the reality is there are some subtle things that physicians can pick up and anything you can pick up, whether it’s cancer or not, is always a better outcome.”

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“The thing about cancer is it tends to impact all parts of your life. Sometimes it can take over your life. Some individuals are opposed to that happening. What they try to do is separate it. This is the disease part, I’ll deal with it, but this is the life part. It’s not so surprising. I’ve encountered patients who are the same. Their family may not know. Society tends to view you or treat you differently when you have an illness so they don’t want that type of attention.”