



Actor Jack Klugman Lends His Voice to the Early Detection of Oral Cancer

MALIBU, Calif., Oct. 11 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Three-time Emmy winner and cancer survivor, actor Jack Klugman couldn't speak for more than three years after his cancer treatments. Having regained his voice, he's lending it to the Oral Cancer Foundation's effort to educate the public through television PSAs about the need for an annual screening to catch oral cancers in their early, most survivable stages. The public service announcements began airing September 15, and will continue to air in several hundred markets in the United States through the end of the year.

Klugman, who is most famous for his television roles portraying compulsive slob Oscar Madison in "The Odd Couple" and medical examiner Quincy in "Quincy, M.E.," recently made his return to television with an appearance as a medical examiner on "Crossing Jordan" and in live theater to rave reviews in the production of "An Evening with Jack Klugman." Klugman returns to the stage again this month at the Falcon Theatre in "Golf With Alan Shepard," directed by Skip Greer; and in the spring will play a movie director in "The Value of Names," to be staged at New York's Queens Theatre in the Park.

"When I contacted Jack about doing the PSA for the Oral Cancer Foundation, he responded immediately," said Brian Hill, foundation executive director, and himself a survivor of a late stage oral cancer. "He said, 'I'm your perfect candidate--I'm here today only because my doctors found it and treated it early... let's do it!'"

Klugman credits early detection for his survival of cancer and his subsequent return to stage and screen. But Klugman deserves credit of his own--for seeking treatment long before many others typically do. When he developed hoarseness, a common warning sign, he went straight to his doctors, who immediately diagnosed the cancer. His prompt action allowed doctors to successfully treat Klugman--through with surgery that included removal of his right vocal cord. The surgery left him without the ability to speak. It took Klugman more than three years to recover his voice. But with extensive therapy, he was able to regain a voice that, while raspy and soft, allows him not only to be understood, but to perform. While still struggling in recovery and voice rehabilitation, he credits long time friend and Odd Couple partner Tony Randall with pushing and encouraging him when times were tough. Klugman states, "Tony told me that I had better get working on my therapy, because he was going to see that we brought the Odd Couple back to stage in less than a year. I told him he was crazy, but with his encouragement and extensive therapy it came to pass."

Hill states that "working with Klugman was an incredible experience. This guy is a fighter, and he has a passion for life that is palpable. As an example of someone who has faced adversity such as the loss of his voice and come back to excel in his craft, he has become a real hero figure to me."

The Oral Cancer Foundation's public service campaign aims to help others survive and thrive as Klugman has. Approximately 30,000 Americans per year are newly diagnosed with oral cancer. Only half of them will be alive in five years. The death rate for oral cancer is higher than that of many we routinely hear about such as cervical cancer, prostate cancer, or skin cancer (malignant melanoma), reports the Newport Beach, California-based Oral Cancer Foundation. The death toll is particularly high because lack of public awareness, combined with infrequent opportunistic screenings for the condition by the medical and dental professions. This results in a disease that in two-thirds of cases, is found as a late-stage, advanced cancer. Chances for recovery at this stage are significantly worse than if oral cancer is caught early. Death rates from cancers such as that of the cervix, skin, and prostate, have decreased as annual checks for those diseases have been adopted--this could also be the case with oral cancer, if the simple and painless screening procedure were to be adopted as a routine part of dental or physical examinations.

About the Oral Cancer Foundation

The Oral Cancer Foundation, founded by oral cancer survivor Brian R. Hill, is a non-profit 501(c) 3, public service charity that gives oral cancer patients information, engages in advocacy, and promotes awareness, prevention, and early detection in the public arena, and in the practice of both medicine and dentistry. It maintains an extensive informational and support oriented web site at www.oralcancer.org that receives over 12 million hits per month. At the forefront of this year's agenda is an effort to promote solid awareness in the minds of the American public about the need to undergo an annual oral cancer screening, and an outreach to the dental community to provide this service as a matter of routine practice. Supporting the foundation's goals is a scientific advisory board composed of leading cancer authorities from varied medical and dental specialties and from prominent cancer and educational institutions in the United States.

Media information: Any members of the media that would like Beta SP tapes of the 30 and 60 second PSA, transcripts, or the PSA in other formats such as QuickTime for web use, may contact the foundation and receive one at no charge for unlimited use by emailing info@oralcancerfoundation.org
Contact Information: Brian Hill, stage IV oral cancer survivor, Founder / Executive Director, The Oral Cancer Foundation Inc., Direct: (949) 278-4362 or bhill@oralcancerfoundation.org
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