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Senator Kennedy Has a Malignant Brain Tumor

By [PAM BELLUCK](#) and [CARL HULSE](#)

BOSTON — Senator [Edward M. Kennedy](#), the longtime Massachusetts Democrat and patriarch of the Kennedy family, has a malignant [brain tumor](#), his doctors said on Tuesday.

Doctors here at [Massachusetts General Hospital](#), who were investigating the cause of a [seizure](#) that Mr. Kennedy, 76, suffered at his Cape Cod compound on Saturday, said preliminary results from a [biopsy](#) of the brain had revealed that he has a malignant glioma in the left parietal lobe, the upper left part of his brain.

Dr. Lee H. Schwamm, the hospital's vice chairman of neurology, and Dr. Larry Ronan, Mr. Kennedy's primary care physician at the hospital, said in a statement that "the usual course of treatment includes combinations of various forms of radiation and [chemotherapy](#)" and that "decisions regarding the best course of treatment for Senator Kennedy will be determined after further testing and analysis."

News of the brain tumor jolted people in Washington, Massachusetts and beyond, generating reaction from around the world, where Mr. Kennedy's family legacy and his 46 years in the Senate have made him a well-known figure.

Aside from an unsuccessful run for president in 1980, Mr. Kennedy has focused his energy on issues including health care, education and civil rights. Despite his liberal ideology and occasional loud clashes on the Senate floor, Mr. Kennedy is held in high esteem by the opposition for his determination, understanding of the issues, and a willingness to work in a bipartisan fashion on subjects like education, health care and [immigration](#).

"Senator Kennedy enjoys great respect and admiration on this side of the aisle," said Senator [Mitch McConnell](#) of Kentucky, the Republican leader. "He is indeed one of the most important figures to ever serve in this body in our history."

In a statement, President Bush said, "Ted Kennedy is a man of tremendous courage, remarkable strength, and powerful spirit." Mr. Bush said he and his wife, Laura, "join our fellow Americans in praying for his full recovery."

Senator [John McCain](#) echoed that sentiment, and both Senators [Barack Obama](#) and [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) invoked Mr. Kennedy at length on Tuesday night in their speeches following the Oregon and Kentucky primaries.

Doctors and people close to Mr. Kennedy said he would remain in the hospital for the next couple of days. The doctors said he was “in overall good condition” and “remains in good spirits and full of energy.” He has not had another seizure since he was hospitalized, they said.

“Right now, he’s his normal self, except for the news that he’s dealing with,” said a close friend who spoke on the condition of anonymity. “I bet he’ll be back at the Cape sailing this weekend. I expect he’ll go back to work” after the Memorial Day recess.

Senate Democrats and Republicans learned of Mr. Kennedy’s condition as they were gathered for their weekly closed-door party luncheons, and members of both parties were visibly shaken by the news.

As he opened debate on the Iraq spending bill, Senator [Robert C. Byrd](#) of West Virginia, at 90 the only current senator to serve longer than Mr. Kennedy, was distraught. “Ted, Ted, my dear friend, I love you and miss you,” Mr. Byrd said in halting remarks on the floor.

Malignant glioma is the most common form of brain [cancer](#), accounting for about 9,000 cases diagnosed each year in the United States, according to the [National Cancer Institute](#). They are more common in older people, especially those between the ages of 75 and 84, according to the [American Cancer Society](#).

The prognosis varies depending on the type and severity of the [tumor](#), and the patient’s age. The American Cancer Society said survival rates dropped with increasing age.

Dr. Patrick Y. Wen, clinical director of the Center for Neuro-Oncology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, said the average prognosis for the most aggressive type of glioma was 14 to 15 months, while the prognosis for slower-growing [tumors](#) was two to four years.

“This is a sad situation,” Dr. Wen said. He said that such tumors can sometimes affect sensation, speech, or vision, and that tumors in older people tend to be harder to treat. “These are unfortunately aggressive tumors.”

Alain Charest, an assistant professor of [neurosurgery](#) at [Tufts](#) Medical Center, said if the tumor could be removed surgically doctors would do so, although gliomas are difficult to remove because cells from the tumor tend to travel to other parts of the brain. Radiation and chemotherapy usually follow surgery.

Dr. Carl B. Heilman, chairman of the department of neurosurgery at Tufts Medical Center, said that most people went back to work after a biopsy, and that many patients responded well to [radiation therapy](#) and oral chemotherapy at first.

Senator [John Kerry](#) of Massachusetts said on Tuesday in Washington that he had visited Mr. Kennedy over the weekend.

“He’s in a fighting mood,” Mr. Kerry said. “He is asking questions about what the choices are for him. He’s deeply involved in making all the kinds of personal decisions that any of you would.”

Mr. Kerry added: “He would call you and help arrange a discussion with a bunch of doctors to talk about a wife who was sick or a child or any number of things — now everybody needs to do that on behalf of Ted. Everybody needs to pull for him and his family and remember that this guy is one unbelievable fighter.”

In Massachusetts, the impact of Mr. Kennedy’s persona and political legacy is hard to overestimate.

“There’ll never be another Ted Kennedy,” said Paul S. Grogan, president and chief executive of the Boston Foundation, which finances nonprofits involved in economic development and other state issues. “He’s sort of Horatio at the bridge. He’s been such an outsized figure, so influential, so effective.”

Mr. Grogan said that Mr. Kennedy had given Massachusetts a level of political prominence beyond what would normally be accorded a state of its size, and that he had helped engineer policies and financing mechanisms that benefited important sectors of the state, including universities and medical centers.

“He’s single-handedly postponed the onset of Massachusetts’s political decline,” Mr. Grogan said, adding, “His vigor, his vitality and his longevity has kind of encouraged us all to believe that he’s immortal, and we’ve gotten used to the idea that he’s going to be around forever. But this is a reminder that he’s not.”

Cameron Kerry, a lawyer who is the brother of Senator Kerry, said the news of the brain tumor was “like an earthquake,” adding, “He’s just such a colossus that this kind of shakes the ground underneath everything.”

Mr. Kerry said that “on a political level, he’s just been so good to my brother and to the whole family. He really is like family.”

Jack Connors, a businessman who is active in Democratic causes, said: “Ted Kennedy raised public service to an art form. Ted Kennedy has really been a hero for people who don’t really have much of a voice.”

Representative [Barney Frank](#), Democrat of Massachusetts, called him “clearly the most influential senator in U.S. history.” Mr. Frank added: “His personality, his understanding of the legislative process, his dedication. He has a good sense of other people, a lot of empathy. And he hires first-rate people and knows how to benefit from them.”

Legislators close to Mr. Kennedy, like Senator [Christopher J. Dodd](#), Democrat of Connecticut, said on Tuesday that they were certain Mr. Kennedy would return to work and would battle the tumor with his characteristic tenacity and energy.

“He’s a fighter,” said Representative [Edward J. Markey](#), Democrat of Massachusetts, “and he’s definitely ready for this fight.”

Pam Belluck reported from Boston, and Carl Hulse from Washington. Katie Zezima contributed reporting from Boston.

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