

National Jewish Discharges Andrew Speaker

JULY 26, 2007

DENVER — National Jewish Medical and Research Center discharged patient Andrew Speaker at 6 a.m. Thursday, July 26, after the successful completion of his in-patient treatment for multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis. Mr. Speaker's physicians do not consider him completely cured yet, but his surgery and antibiotic treatment have eliminated any detectable evidence of infection, and he is noncontagious. He will continue antibiotic treatment for approximately two years.

"Treatment for Mr. Speaker went very well, and we were able to release him more quickly than we originally anticipated," said Gwen Huitt, MD, Director of the Adult Infectious Disease Care Unit at National Jewish. "Although we believe there are still a few tuberculosis bacteria in his lungs, ongoing antibiotic therapy should kill those. We expect him to return to a full and active life."

"The two recent cases of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis treated here at National Jewish highlight the expertise and teamwork that have made National Jewish the #1 respiratory hospital in the nation for ten years in a row," said Michael Salem, MD, President and CEO of National Jewish.

Mr. Speaker has been receiving several antibiotic medicines since his arrival eight weeks ago and had surgery July 17 to remove the upper right lobe of his lung, which contained a tennis-ball size area of infection. CT scans taken just before surgery indicated that the antibiotic therapy was effectively fighting Mr. Speaker's disease.

"I really appreciate the quality of care I have gotten from all the people at National Jewish," said Mr. Speaker. "Thanks to all they do, patients like me are able to walk out of here not only *well*, but *better* in so many ways."

Because he is no longer contagious, Mr. Speaker could have traveled by commercial airline back to his home state of Georgia. But given the extraordinary attention he has received, everyone involved in the case agreed that it would be better to return home via air ambulance so as not to raise any undue public alarm. Mr. Speaker and his family were met in Georgia by Mr. Speaker's parents and driven to an undisclosed location where he will continue his recuperation.

Mr. Speaker has been released from the Denver Public Health isolation order. He was instructed to seek medical attention and to continue directly observed therapy in his community, as well as to follow up with National Jewish physicians. Mr. Speaker will check in with county health authorities on Friday morning to begin two years of directly observed therapy. In directly observed therapy healthcare workers watch Mr. Speaker take medicines so they can be assured that he fully completes his therapy. National Jewish recommends directly observed therapy for all its drug-resistant tuberculosis patients because the treatment period is so long and failure to complete it raises the odds of a relapse with disease that is resistant to even more drugs.

Mr. Speaker is under no other restrictions, beyond the requirement to undergo directly observed therapy. He does not have to wear any kind of mask and neither do the people around him.

Mr. Speaker will likely return to National Jewish in several months for follow up evaluation, but those plans have not been settled.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 124 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

Media Contacts

Our team is available to arrange interviews, discuss events and story ideas.

Jessica Berry

303.398.1082

berryj@njhealth.org