

Dear members of the SIM community,

SIM's long-time friend and supervising Senior Teacher, Steve Armstrong, underwent surgery for a brain tumor in the last several days. Fortunately, neither his speech nor his thinking has been affected. Follow up evaluation and treatment are underway. A letter Steve wrote last week, when he first learned of his situation, follows immediately below.

You can stay posted on Steve's condition through CaringBridge at <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/stevenkarmstrong>. You can also send notes and good wishes to Steve and Kamala Masters through the same site. They have asked that we all use this site for communications, rather than reaching out to them directly or through the Vipassana Metta Foundation (VMF).

We anticipate Steve facing both a loss of income during post- surgery treatment as well as medical expenses in the form of deductibles, co-pays and out of network service costs since the surgery took place in Honolulu, rather than Seattle. This will also have financial implications for the Vipassana Metta Foundation (VMF) and for Kamala. Steve and Kamala founded and sustain VMF and its retreat sanctuary together.

We encourage you to make a financial contribution, if you are able to do so, at <http://vipassanametta.org/wp/donations/>.

Thank you for your good wishes and support for Steve and Kamala, two teachers who have supported the SIM community since its inception 15 years ago.

Cathy Vigran
President, SIM Board of Directors

Dennis Warren
SIM Founding Teacher

[Letter from Steve Armstrong](#)

Aloha Friends,

Six days ago while installing some prayer flags at the sanctuary on Maui with my friend Roger, over the course of 30-45 seconds, I noticed I had some trouble trying to say something to him. I tried a second time and also wasn't able to form my words or sentences clearly. I tried a third time and also wasn't able to express my thoughts. Instead, my words came out garbled and meaningless to him. Roger thought I might be goofing with him as I am playfully able to do, but I wasn't. Within a few minutes I was able to speak normally again. Later when I related my experience to Kamala and Sharon,

Roger's wife, they suggested I speak to someone about this. I called Andy, a friend and former emergency room doctor who suggested I immediately take an aspirin and get to the emergency room, a 45 minute drive to the Maui hospital where I was given a CAT scan and admitted to the hospital for tests and observation over the next 48 hours.

I have been diagnosed with a growth in the left parietal lobe of the brain, the area of speech function. It looks to be a fast growing tumor and a subsequent MRI eliminated other cancers in the body as a source for a metastasis. With Kamala's help and support we are sorting out the options for treatment. My good friend Dr. Thanh Huynh, a recently retired oncologist in Honolulu, presented my CAT scans, MRIs, echocardiograms, etc., to a panel of oncologists, neurosurgeons, radiologists and oncology radiologists at Queens Hospital in Honolulu to consider my situation and the consensus was to undergo surgery as soon as possible.

Kamala and I will be traveling to Honolulu tomorrow, Monday, to consult with a neurosurgeon there. I was offered the option of have the surgery performed at UCSF (the recognized world leader in brain surgery) or also at the University of Washington in Seattle. Given that the growth is relatively close to the surface, not too large, has not yet caused any noticeable permanent damage to the brain and is within the skill range of surgeons at Queens, we have decided to have the surgery done closer to home. The removed tissue will be biopsied and if indeed a cancer, (it could be an infection), a protocol of treatment with radiation and chemo will be instituted for 6-7 weeks of 5 days/week on Maui.

Our former caretaker, Brian Rose, now a registered nurse, formerly employed at the Maui Hospital has offered to come to Maui to be my attendant, assistant, and chauffeur for the first few months of treatment.

Needless to say, I will have to cancel my participation in leading retreats for a few to several months. I will be contacting the organizers to suggest other arrangements.

[I will not be able to be with you for our scheduled day-long on April 22, and possible June 10th. I will miss you all.]

I am very grateful for all my family members, friends, and students who have expressed concern and offered to help in whatever way possible and most importantly I am very grateful for the love and support of my partner Kamala without whom this would be a very lonely journey.

I anticipate learning a lot during this time, and I will offer periodic updates to my condition as I am able, but will be devoting most of my energy to healing

so please forgive me if I do not respond to personal emails. I appreciate all of your concern and prayers for my well-being and healing. I have unshakable faith in the dhamma, love and the power and wisdom of awareness.

Blessings to you.

With gratitude for your friendship,
Steve