Cancer Connections

July 25, 2015
Cancer Connections

Me
Who Am I?

• I come from the Fitness Industry
• Long history of “never being sick”
• There must be a mistake, right?
Genetics

- Mom died of uterine cancer at age 59
- Her mother died of breast cancer at age 62
- Uncle Alvin died of cancer at age 70
- I was 64 when all this went down
BEFORE TREATMENT

From ‘Not Feeling Good’ to Intolerable

- For over a year - tired, slow, achy, ‘not me’
  - Summer of Fatigue 2013
  - Too tired to drive
  - ‘I don’t think you’ve got the energy’

- Time to get back in shape
• **Crushing symptoms arrived**
  - Intolerable itching
  - Drenching night sweats
  - Unexplained weight loss
  - Debilitating fatigue
  - Alcohol intolerance

• **Disney World - November**

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• Diagnosed with Stage 3 Hodgkin Lymphoma
  o December 6, 2013
  o (My wife’s 60th birthday!)
  o And…
• Port inserted day after Christmas
• 1st chemotherapy treatment -- Northwestern Memorial January 2, 2014
• Treatment ended June 2014

• 1-year CT scan July 15, 2015
DURING TREATMENT
'Normal' Life

Symptoms/Diagnosis

Treatment

Improvement

Cancer Survivor
What kept me – me – after my diagnosis?

• **Attitude is everything**
  o All I could control
  o I’m an optimist. I love life.
  o I refused to lose the essence of who I am.
  o I was sick. I was miserable. I was suffering.
  o Let’s get me treated.
  o Close this chapter and move on

• **Embracing treatment**
  o Chemo was my friend not my enemy.
  o My body was fighting a losing battle. It needed help or I could die.
  o Whatever the side effects – they would be minor and tolerable compared to where I was.
Hitting My Hodgkin's Curveball

Welcome to my Blog. It got laborious trying to remember who I told what, especially with circumstances changing regularly. Rather than exhausting myself by retelling the same info over and over again, I'm using this nifty Blog. You can check it whenever you want and voila! - you'll know my situation. Thanks for your kind words and deeds thus far. It's just the very beginning of a long journey, a journey made much easier knowing I have your love and support! - Chuck

December 18, 2013

On December 6 (Barb's birthday) I was officially diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. A bummer to say the least. The bright side is all the docs and research indicate it's curable and that's my hope and intent.

On December 16 my oncologist, Dr. Leo Gordon (look him up and prepare to be impressed), called to confirm the diagnosis and add that I'm Stage 3B. Apparently, Hodgkin's is a bit rare afflicting only 8,000 or 9,000 people a year, and within that group it's unusual to find somebody my age.

Dr. Gordon's recommended treatment is to begin with the BEEACOPP
This Is Not A Picnic

- BEEACOP
- Fatigue
- Neutropenic fever
- The ER – is there a worse place for me?
- Bottoming out
- It’s only hair

- “No evidence of disease”
AFTER TREATMENT

What do you think about when you reflect on what you’ve been through?

• I’m a lucky guy…
  o I got cancer in 2013. 15 years earlier and the outcome could have been much different.
  o Nobody cut me. No organs sliced, diced, or replaced
  o Hodgkin Lymphoma is curable
  o I have the best oncologist on the planet -- Dr. Leo Gordon
What do you think about when you reflect on what you’ve been through?

• I’m a lucky guy…
  o My support group was small, but huge
  o My Imerman Angel, Dan
  o I had friends who read my blog and sent me silly notes
  o I had – and have – the support of a loving family
What do you think about when you reflect on what you’ve been through?

- I’m a lucky guy...
  - Most of all…
  - I had – and have – the love and support of an awesome caregiver
What do you think about when you reflect on what you’ve been through?

• **We are not alone**
  - Even if you think you are, you’re not
  - Galter 21st Floor will tell you that
  - Resources -- and people -- are there for you
    - Not expensive, often free
    - Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
    - Imerman Angels
    - Cancer Centers

• **We didn’t volunteer**
The Story Doesn’t End There…

• 1-year post-treatment CT scan – 10 days ago
• Just a formality - I feel great

• “We found a little something”
• PET scan confirmed – the cancer is back
• Biopsy next week
• 4 month treatment
  • Chemotherapy – but a new cocktail
  • Radiation
  • Stem cell transplant, including 3-week hospital stay – right here
  • 80% cure rate
What Will I Do Now?

NEVER

GIVE UP
Cancer Connections

Thank You!