Keesha Sharp Honors Her Mom

Since her mother died of pancreatic cancer, actress Keesha Sharp wants to teach others about the robust research on the disease's treatment.

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Actress, writer and director Keesha Sharp, known for her roles on the TV show Empire and the feature film Marshall, has a positive message for people living with pancreatic cancer. She has teamed up with the Pancreatic Cancer Collective on a public service announcement to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer research.

The reason was her mom. "Mary was one of those people who was always doing everything for everybody, the one people called on to help them feel better," Sharp says. Four years ago, her mom was diagnosed with early-stage pancreatic cancer, which was treated with surgery but returned as metastatic disease a year later. By the time she got into a clinical trial for a promising new treatment, it was too late—she died after just two sessions.

"Those last two years were incredibly tough," says Sharp. "It was horrible, but there is also beauty in it. My mom and I believe in God, so I knew she was going to a better place. That's my spiritual side, and I was grateful. But my human side—the child in me—was ailing."

Now, Sharp wants to teach others about the robust research on pancreatic cancer treatment. "It's too late for my mom, but if I can help another sister, another mom, another son, that's what I want," says Sharp. Her voice can be heard in an animated public service ad featuring the Pancreatic Cancer Collective, a joint initiative with Stand Up To Cancer and the Lustgarten Foundation that has funded more than 400 investigators from nearly 70 leading research centers in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Sharp is particularly passionate about getting the word out to the Black community, which has a 20% higher incidence of pancreatic cancer than any other racial or ethnic group. She wants people to appreciate that there is hope when it comes to treating pancreatic cancer. Visit PancreaticCancerCollective.org for more info.

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