In the Spotlight

A roundup of celebrities who made cancer news and raised awareness

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Sharing Their Cancer Journeys

- Hall of Fame quarterback and Fox NFL Sunday cohost Terry Bradshaw scored a touchdown for cancer awareness when he announced, on air, that he overcame cancer twice in the span of a year: bladder cancer and Merkel cell carcinoma. “Folks, I may not look like my old self,” he said in October, “but I feel like my old self. I’m cancer-free. And over time, I’m going to be back to where I normally am.”

- Journalist Katie Couric is no stranger to cancer advocacy—after losing her first husband to the disease, she broadcast her colonoscopy on Today in 2000. So when Couric was diagnosed with breast cancer in the summer, she shared her story and some knowledge. “Forty-five percent of women in this country (yes, nearly half) have dense breasts, which can make it difficult for mammograms alone to detect abnormalities,” she wrote on Katie Couric Media. In short: The denser your breasts, the higher your risk of cancer.

- During a routine checkup, Monty Python comedy legend Eric Idle learned he had early-stage pancreatic cancer. The cancer’s gone, but an advocate emerged. In an often humorous essay in Time, Idle hits a serious note: “I encourage people in families at high risk of pancreatic cancer to explore the newer tests available for detecting the disease early.” He also appeared on the The Masked Singer to see whether he could still perform after his cancer treatment, and he partnered with research charity Stand Up To Cancer to start the Bright Side Fund to raise money and help others.

- Meanwhile, newly elected governor of Arkansas (and former White House press secretary) Sarah Huckabee Sanders and actress Jane Fonda each took to social media to share cancer stories. After learning she had thyroid cancer, Sanders underwent successful surgery to remove her thyroid and surrounding lymph nodes and is now cancer-free. “The experience has been a reminder,” she added, “that whatever battle you may be facing, don’t lose heart.” Fonda also conveyed hope and added a social message. “I’ve been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and have started chemo treatments,” Fonda wrote. “This is a very treatable cancer. 80% survive, so I feel very lucky. I’m also lucky because I have health insurance and access to the best doctors and treatments. Far too many [families] don’t have access to the quality health care I am receiving, and this is not right.”

Promoting Research and Prevention

- After losing her husband to myelofibrosis, a bone marrow cancer, Lynda Carter Altman—the original Wonder Woman—partnered with TGen and City of Hope to establish a fund to study the blood cancer and raise awareness.

- To help encourage breast cancer screenings, Paris Hilton shared photos and video of her MRI scan with her 20.5 million Instagram followers.

- When actor Ryan Reynolds lost a bet with Rob McElhenney, he documented his colonoscopy and posted it on YouTube (along with McElhenny’s screening) in partnership with Lead From Behind, aiming to “make colon cancer famous.”

- R&B legend Mary J. Blige joined First Lady Jill Biden and the American Cancer Society at the White House to kick off a series of national roundtable discussions on breast and cervical cancers. The effort dovetails with the Biden administration’s Cancer Moonshot initiative.

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