30 Days of Gratitude Challenge Day 15 — Clinical Trials

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November 15, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

I did not get the abrupt end in treatment most other early stage cancer patients get — instead of going for my last follow up after chemo which would then lead to a 6-month or yearly follow-up between oncology and surgery, I signed up to be part of a clinical trial.

I have written a lot about my decision making process and the trial itself for an already approved drug called Ibrance but I have not yet written about being thankful for it.

Instead of going the 6-12–month follow-up route, I began my life after chemo and radiation with every 2-week visits to Sloan for blood work and then clearance to continue the trial at the original dosage. Many people would get dosage tweaked or changed around if their side effects were too bad (the list of side effects were about 6 pages long on my study sign-up paperwork).

Once I hit the 3-month mark, I switched to visits every 3 months instead of every 2 weeks. I now go in and do bloodwork, see oncologist or nurse, and then pick up the next 3 months of pills.

I am on cycle (or month) 17 (starts next week) of a 24-month study.

I am thankful to be at Sloan and to have been offered this study — I am also happy, despite the side effects and the potential for infection due to low WBC [white blood cells] that means any fever must be checked by hospital, that I am doing this trial. It might one day by the standard of care for early-stage breast cancer and hopefully it helps me continue to be NED as I approach my second cancerversary and for many many years beyond.

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