Dodging a Bullet

It looks like we dodged another bullet. The fun never stops, does it?

September 12, 2021 By Dann Wonser

Last Tuesday, when we met with my radiologist before radiation treatment wrapped up, I asked one more time why I was having such difficulty breathing. He did everything he could to ignore the question, and even tried to blame it on anxiety, but this was a tug-of-war we weren't' going to lose. Finally, he said I should get a CT to see if I had a pulmonary embolism.

I had the CT last Friday. An hour after the scan I got a call from the resident who had been with the radiologist. He sounded rattled when he told me that I did have a pulmonary embolism, and that I should go straight to the ER to get started on blood thinners.

Of course it's more complicated than that. Because of my cancer history and advanced age (slightly insulting), The ER doc wanted me to spend the night to get stabilized. After eight hours in the ER, I had my bed. Genevieve finally left the hospital at 2 AM.

We did learn a few ER tricks, however. Bring food, a cell phone charger, meds, and if you think you might spend the night, a change of clothes and a toothbrush. Lesson learned. We live close enough that Genevieve went home and got those things while we were waiting for the bed.

Because I had very minor pain in my calf they did an ultrasound on my legs, and discovered more blood clots. The treatment is the same, so it was just proof that I was in more of a mess than we thought.

The extremely fortunate part of all of this is that without getting the CT scan, we would have been sitting on a plane for six hours, which could have been fatal with blood clots. Of course, it's not just good luck. If we had not demanded that the radiologist figure out what was wrong, we would have been on that plane, and Genevieve might have been writing the next blog.

The best explanation for why I got the blood clots came from my oncologist, Dr. Patel. I already knew that people with lung cancer (and it turns out cancers in general) get blood clots easily. But why now? Dr. Patel said that the steroids I have been taking since the onset of radiation may have been one last "blood thickener" that tipped me over the edge. Four days after starting steroids, the shortness of breath started.

It's remarkable I could get blood clots anyway, since every day I take a low dose aspirin plus mega-doses of turmeric and cinnamon, which are all blood thinners. It's a wonder I didn't spring a

leak like geyser if my skin was pricked. The combination probably kept me from getting a clot before now, but I've had to stop all of them while I take this medication.

There was a wonderful bonus to the CT scan. While they were poking around for blood clots they also looked at the cancer. The cancer in my lymph nodes has shrunk a little, and all of the nodes in my lungs are the same or slightly smaller! How can this cancer be shrinking, when it has been growing for the last few months? I give credit to all of you, and of course Genevieve, for your love, thoughts and prayers. Thank you so much! This doesn't change what we need to do next, but it makes the waiting far easier when we know the cancer isn't running rampant while we wait for the biopsy results. We should know more in a couple weeks.

Love,

Dann

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