

Not Everything Is About Cancer

Life also includes headaches, TMJ, temporal arteritis, heart surgery—and even some good news.

January 23, 2024 By [Dann Wonser](#)

There are those occasions when not everything is about cancer. This is one of those times.

It starts with headaches I've had all day, every day since chemo started. I believe it's the ramucirumab since I had a similar drug (Avastin) eleven years ago and had headaches like this for over a year. I also had intense dental/jaw pain that led to a root canal six weeks ago. That pain never subsided and has morphed into lockjaw. As a result, I've been on a liquid diet since Christmas. Muscle relaxers and five sessions of PT haven't helped, so I've seen an oncology dentist who specializes in both TMJ and oncology. A CT of my jaw revealed no necrosis (whew), so I'll probably get an MRI in a couple weeks to rule out any tumors in the soft tissue. I don't expect tumors, but I certainly want to get a new treatment plan soon.

I've also been very concerned about the love of my life. Genevieve was recently diagnosed with temporal arteritis, which can cause blindness or stroke if left untreated. That was scary for a while until the diagnosis was cleared up, treatment got started, and we found a rheumatologist we trust.

Meanwhile, our heater was out for three days, got replaced, and then the new heater went out for another three days until a faulty circuit board could be replaced. Like some old beatniks, our house was stuck in the fifties both times this happened.

All of this didn't seem as serious after someone very close to me had a heart attack. Three days later he had a quadruple bypass. His recovery has started out well, and he's feeling fortunate this didn't happen when he was on his recent three-week rafting trip in the Grand Canyon.

Not everything has been this hard, however. Last week we got my latest scan results, and the cancer is still shrinking! There's less haziness in my lungs and the fluid has decreased. When I finish my final round of chemo, which will be in five weeks, Dr. Sanborn is recommending that I stay on ramucirumab by itself for as long as it prevents the cancer from growing. If it works like the Avastin did (they are both angiogenesis inhibitors, which stop the cancer's blood vessels from growing), that could give me another year before I need the next treatment. Despite the headaches, we're excited! Anything that buys me more time means that there is more of a chance for new treatments to come along while I wait. I'm also hoping the PT can help with the headaches, given they mostly come from the back of my head and seem muscle related.

So not everything going on in my life has been about cancer lately. But then again, some of it has

been, like my recent hairstyle.

Dann Wonser's got a new look

Courtesy of Dann Wonser

Love,

Dann

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