When You Get Sick Post "Cancer"

February 27, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

I am a very lucky person—in general … I pretty much "sailed" through chemotherapy (comparatively speaking in terms of some of the stories I have been learning about since I started sharing my story). No one can "sail" through it as the 8 rounds I did were really one of the hardest things I have ever done in my life. But, during these rounds, I did not have to go to the emergency room at all during chemotherapy, which I am counting as a big win. I almost had to go once but thankfully I did not run a fever despite getting dangerously close.

After chemo came radiation and I did a pretty good job of being "healthy" during that process. (Note: I put "healthy" in quotes because as I was diagnosed with stage3A cancer, I just do not know when/if I will ever be called "healthy" again without quotes …) Then once I was done with treatment, I began my clinical trial of Ibrance for the Pallas trial and just kept on chugging along—losing weight, exercising, looking for work, starting to be an entrepreneur again and being a mom, wife and friend … you know, the usual.

At seven months into my clinical trial, I got hit with something. It came out of nowhere and next thing I know, I had a fever of over 101. It knocked me flat on my ass. I was absolutely shot and it happened so quick. On Valentine's Day, I was all over NYC getting my Lupron shot, hanging out in my office space on Wall Street and working hard then I got my kids, took them to Perkins and still felt pretty good. I woke up Thursday feeling like I got hit by a bus.

I could not move and the fever, my head, everything ached and hurt. I called Sloan and for the first time, it was hard to figure out what I needed to do (which could very much be due to the fact that I was sick and unable to think straight). I had to call a few times to find out what to do and then I was told that the Urgent Center at Sloan was at capacity and that they had been told not to send any other patients there. I took a gamble, though and decided to go to the Sloan hospital, anyway. The reasons for this is mainly that a) I am on a clinical trial drug that only Sloan would understand and b) my local hospital is often really crazy and full of tons of germs vs. Sloan being a cancer hospital is focused on types of patients like me—ones whose immune system is compromised and not quite normal.

When I got there, I was ready to wait and I guess I did but the time flew because I listened to Paige_Previvor's mom and streamed The Marvelous Mrs Maisel while I was there and the time flew. I was there only for 4 hours total but during that time, I had blood work done for cultures and CBC count, blood pressure and vitals and, because I had a small cough, a chest X-ray!

I was good for everything, even the chest X-ray, though in the back of my mind was the fear, the scanziety, the “what if” ...

After a while, a doctor came to find me and asked me to meet with him in a private room. I was already on edge, quite suddenly, convinced there was BAAADD news. I followed him to one room and another as we could not find an empty one. When we found an empty one, he walked in, I sat down and he looked at me. That was it—he did not speak, he just looked at me from across the room. At this point, I am petrified to ask, but I have to ask.

I start off easily asking how my bloodwork was and he said the blood was good. I then asked, “How was the chest X-ray?” though asking this question took all of my strength and bravado and he said, “Oh, it was fine.” OMG I could not breathe until he said that ... what an experience. He then said that he would check with my oncologist and send me home.

Then, a nurse came to me in the waiting room and told me there was a bed available for me and I was like, “Huh, what ... I think I am going home.” Then, I got to go home!

It was interesting and again I was not 100 percent normal during any of it and then I came home and continued to vegetate for a few days. I also had no appetite for those days and could not eat due to pains and aches—man once I began to feel better, I had to build myself back up.

It was tough to feel so sick again and it did “trigger” me to think back to chemo and feeling that run down and sick ... Also, the scanziety was short but very intense.

How did you handle getting “sick” after cancer? This is what I share in the time between...

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