# Getting Something Off My Chest

There's something I've been wanting to get off my chest for a long time, but first things first.

February 15, 2022 By Dann Wonser

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Friends and Family,

I had a CT scan last week, and we met with my oncologist last Wednesday. I will start out by telling you that for us right now, one of the most beautiful words in the English language is "stable."

Stable! Those are the results of my latest scan. As in, the massive improvement in my scans from six weeks ago is holding steady. And that's not the only good sign. My lab work is moving more and more into the normal range. Dr. Sanborn told us she panicked a little when she read in my chart that I had put on weight in the last three weeks, thinking that it was probably fluid building up in my legs again. That's why she questioned me so carefully about how I was feeling and was extra thorough checking my legs – to make sure. But the weight gain was real, another sign that I'm getting healthier. Part of that is that I'm also gaining some of my appetite back, but beyond that, having a body that reacts normally to food means that my force-feeding program of the last three months is paying off.

Fattening up (it's all relative!) is paying other dividends. I'm feeling the cold less. Instead of dreading the frozen moments between getting into the shower and putting my clothes back on again, I'm comfortable with the temperature. I've actually worn only two layers of clothing around the house a few times. I think some of it is the added padding, and some of it is my body getting back to normal self-regulation of temperature.

All of this means that I continue with chemo every three weeks starting last Wednesday, but now the only chemo drug is Alimta. I'm done with my four rounds of carboplatin, and moving on to what I think of in comparison as "chemo lite." Side effects have been minimal, and I'm already on the road to recovery for this round. Nice and easy!

And now for what I wanted to get off my chest. It's not that heavy, but it does have an oversized impact on daily living.

It's called PleurX. I've had two PleurX tubes draining fluid from my lungs for three months. One of the tubes dried up completely (no more cancer in the interstitial lining of my lung), so we had an appointment today to remove it. Dr. Mary suggested that since the other tube was nearly dry, there was less risk of infection if she removed that tube as well. The rest of the fluid will re-absorb on its own, she said.

And so I agreed. Both tubes were plucked from my chest today, while Genevieve turned her head to avoid the sight. I'm a free man again! No more pain at night when and my tubes and fat-free ribs collide with what felt like a rock-hard pillow top mattress. No more restricted movement to prevent accidentally pulling out the tubes or tearing off the bandages. No more awkward improvised showers where Genevieve wrapping me in Glad Wrap to keep water away from my bandages.

The sweet smell of freedom!

It's been a long time since I've been able to be this naturally upbeat. Three months ago, Genevieve had to wheel me around the hospital because I couldn't breathe enough to do it on my own. We were having end-of-life discussions with Dr. Sanborn, as in this-chemo-could-kill-you-or-make-you-better, and defining where my bottom line was before I would want my life to be over. For me, it was constantly gasping for air, and I was very close. It brings me to tears to think how close that moment was.

We are so far from this now that it seems surreal. My strength is coming back, and our daily hour-long hill walks are just as challenging now as they were before my decline last summer. Life is almost as normal as it gets again.

I am grateful for the encouragement that all of you have given me. Some of it has been practical, such as the wonderful meals. Much of it has been verbal, and based on your own experiences. All of it I treasure deeply. Of course, I owe every breath I take to Genevieve, the greatest gift of my lifetime.

Here's hoping you find many things for which you, too, are grateful.

Love,

Dann

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