Gordon Lightfoot's "If you could read my mind," and cancer scan results

November 2, 2017 By Robin McGee

After five infusions of chemotherapy, my MRI results are back, but the implications are not yet clear. The scan showed that the pelvic mass has reduced in volume by 80%; however, the right ureter is still entangled in it. So although I have responded well to the chemo protocol, it is not enough. I anticipate they will order more chemo cycles. I will know more after consulting with the oncologist and the surgeon next week.

The side effects of chemo continue to daunt me. It seems that as soon as one improves, another takes its place. You know when you have a bad flu, and it hurts to touch your skin? It is like that. I cannot get warm. The mouth sores and my broken foot just add another level of misery, effort, and frustration to each day.

Despite everything, we pulled off Halloween! In view of my peg-leg, we adopted a pirate theme. We scared the teenagers with our scabbards. When a little kid came to the door dressed as a sweet princess, we would shout, "We pirates be afraid of princesses!" and then scream in terror, which often made the princess dissolve in helpless giggles. We entertained at least 100 kids with our antics.

Next week, I will be in Halifax at a Canadian Cancer Action Network event aimed at addressing barriers to cancer screening in the Maritime provinces. So even while desperately sick, I am still slogging away at improving healthcare.

My horrible diagnostic story is profiled in the October 2017 issue of Reader's Digest! It is in a piece on speaking up to doctors: the link is here.

Each post, I share the lyrics of a famous popular song, to illustrate the emotions of this journey. Gordon Lightfoot's haunting song "If You Could Read My Mind" is from his 1971 Album with the same title. It reached Number One on Billboard's Easy Listening chart. His voice, so beautifully mellifluous, captures the anguish of his divorce that inspired these lyrics. To me, this song is about estrangement and loss, and incomprehension of another's indifference. Today, I send this song out to Doctor Number Two in my Cancer Olympics story. She had been my family doctor for 14 years at the time of her negligence in my diagnostic horror-show pathway. I think of her with great sadness. I knew her: I thought she knew me. Does she ever reflect on those events? On what they did to my life? Sadly, I will never know.

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