

Helping Young Adult Cancer Survivors Who Are Facing Infertility

Michael Scherer founded Worth the Wait as a way to give back after his testicular cancer diagnosis.

June 1, 2023 By [Justin Birckbichler](#)

Welcome to the [Band of Ballers](#)! In this series on A Ballsy Sense Of Tumor (ABSOT), I'm turning over control to some other ballsy testicular cancer survivors and patients who have inspired me with their work in advocacy and awareness during and after their diagnosis. This month's feature is all about Michael Scherer, who formed Worth The Wait. Enjoy!

I was diagnosed with testicular cancer at age 26. I was in the prime of my life; newly married, thriving in my career, and enjoying being a young couple with good jobs and no obligations! We were traveling, hanging out with friends, and staying active, and suddenly our world came to a halt.

Michael Scherer

Courtesy of Michael Scherer

I had been having some symptoms for a few months, but I didn't connect the symptoms together. Over the next few months, I started to experience pain in my testicle every so often. Finally, I began to experience pain in the nipple area of my chest.

I finally had enough of the symptoms one day and decided to Google the list of symptoms I was experiencing.

Testicular cancer was the first result

My wife convinced me to make an appointment with my primary care physician right away. My physician ordered an ultrasound immediately. Sure enough, the ultrasound came back showing a tumor in my right testicle. My physician confirmed the cancer diagnosis by drawing my blood and testing for tumor markers. I had all 3 markers in my blood test, which explained the pain in my chest and pointed towards an aggressive type of testicular cancer – non-seminoma.

Things started moving quickly from there – with a visit to my oncologist to schedule surgery, followed by nearly 12 months of surveillance treatments – CT scans, chest x-rays and blood draws every 8 weeks. During my 1-year surveillance appointment, we discovered cancer had spread to my retroperitoneal lymph nodes and I had to undergo chemotherapy.

Chemo was no joke. I received bleomycin, etoposide, and cisplatin chemotherapy for 4-5 hours a day for 5 days in a row, followed by a weekend off. I would get another infusion for a few hours on the following two Mondays, with the rest of the week to recover, and then we would start the whole process all over again.

The physical side of cancer and chemotherapy was tough, but all I had to do was show up, and do what the doctors instructed. The mental side was extremely difficult. I figured I would tough the whole experience out, and move on with my life once chemo was over, but little did I know I would begin experiencing panic attacks and extreme anxiety only a year out from chemo. Thankfully, talking to a therapist helped me work through these issues. The chemo worked wonders, and despite sapping my body of strength, hair, and energy, I was declared cancer-free following my 3 rounds of treatment.

Beginning on a journey to parenthood

My wife Megan and I waited a couple of years after chemo to start a family. We quickly learned that my treatments impacted my fertility quite a bit. I wasn't completely infertile, but I was close. We began working with a fertility specialist to help us conceive a child. In total, we completed 7 intrauterine inseminations (IUIs) before conceiving our son Elliott, which took over 2 years. We also researched adoption and began to start our adoption journey right before my wife got pregnant.

We tried to have another child through in-vitro fertilization, but that proved to be unsuccessful. My wife and I were disappointed, but still thrilled to have Elliott, and committed to giving him the best life possible as an only child.

Michael Scherer and family

Courtesy of Michael Scherer

Our fertility journey led us to think about how we could help other young adult cancer survivors who are also facing infertility due to their cancer treatments. We know how difficult both emotionally as well as financially the entire process can be, and we know that the statistics of a positive outcome are not exceedingly high. We were lucky enough to have the funds to pay for our fertility treatments, but it was still tremendously expensive and it put a ton of pressure on us.

Giving back through Worth The Wait

In 2021, we decided to start [Worth the Wait](#), a 501c3 public charity whose mission is to ease the financial burden for young adult cancer survivors who are facing infertility.

Worth the Wait serves the young adult community, and our grants are available to cancer survivors ages 13 to 39. We provide financial assistance to survivors who are preserving fertility before treatment within 10 days of application submission (because timing is of the essence) and have four family building grant cycles a year for those undergoing fertility treatments, pursuing adoption, or surrogacy after treatment.

To qualify for a grant, you must show financial need (based on income), have a history of cancer verified by your oncologist, and live in the U.S. We are also actively fundraising to raise more money to be able to help more people. To date, Worth the Wait has helped 26 survivors in 15 different states.

We want cancer survivors to have a full and satisfying life in survivorship

Cancer can take many things away from an individual or a couple, and we strive to ensure the possibility of starting a family is still within reach for the survivors we help. Being a dad has been the most satisfying accomplishment of my life, and it was almost taken away from my wife and me because of cancer. We are working hard every day to make sure that doesn't happen to others going forward.

Be sure to connect with Michael by visiting him at @WorthTheWaitCharity on Facebook and Instagram. Until next time, Carpe Scrotiem!

Know someone (or even yourself!) who is supporting TC awareness and would be willing to share their story? [Drop their name, contact, and why they should be featured into this Google Form](#) and I'll reach out to them and/or you!

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