On the Rebound

Genevieve and I have certainly had our hands full for the past few weeks. But now things are on the upswing.

December 14, 2021 By Dann Wonser

Rather than take you through each step, I'll summarize:

- A one-shot blast of radiation to a good portion of my spine to dampen the pain in my back, and perhaps knock down some of the cancer growing in my bone marrow.
- A biopsy to my liver while we were simultaneously draining the fluid from my right lung.
- A second procedure to drain the fluid from my left lung. We found out after the first lung that they won't do both at one time due to the risk of having a collapsed lung on both sides at the same time.
- I started chemo two and a half weeks ago, and received a full dose of Alimta and 80% of the usual dose for carboplatin. We did this and crossed our fingers that my platelet count wouldn't crash.
- Two days later I had a procedure to add two semi-permanent drains to my chest, one for each lung. These are designed for Genevieve and me to drain my lungs at home every other day for as long as my lungs keep producing extra fluid.
- I now have oxygen at home to use as needed. I occasionally use it at night when I'm struggling for air.

Despite all those hits to my body, I'm feeling better than I expected. This is me on the upswing!

The first big hit was the radiation, which left me nauseous within minutes of getting zapped, and along with fatigue, stayed with me for another 10 to 11 days. This surprised the radiologist, who acknowledged that it was probably because the radiation also zapped my intestines. A couple of days after the worst of those effects passed, I started chemo and fell back into fatigue and nausea. The first week after chemo, my platelet count remained low but relatively stable, so we had passed the first big hurdle.

Last week is when we got the good news. My platelet count shot back up to over 100,000, back to the normal "safe" range for giving the standard dose of chemo. Dr. Sanborn is confident now that the radiation is what was zapping my platelet count, and we are out of the woods (for platelet counts) from here.

The biggest remaining issues are that it is still hard to breathe, and while the fluid buildup in my lungs isn't getting worse since we keep draining it, the fluid buildup isn't slowing down, either. We're hoping the next round of chemo this Wednesday will attack both of those problems, now that the rest of my body is cooperating better. If it doesn't work, I'm not sure what options we might still have.

I'm doing my best to give my body all the help I can. Last week I started taking walks whenever possible. But these are not the hour-long hill walks that Genevieve and I have done daily since the pandemic began. These are flat ground, slow motion affairs. If we go up a very slight incline, Genevieve leaves me in the dust before she realizes it's even happening. Breathing is that challenging for me at the moment. To compensate, and to stay out of the cold (I've lost what little meat I had on the bone, so I chill quickly), we have begun mall-walking in a nearby mall that is on its last legs. It's not wonderful that the poor mall is struggling, but in the meantime it's perfect for our purposes.

I'm still taking Tagrisso, and that has been approved by my insurance company for at least the next year, so it looks like we are attacking this cancer with everything we can for right now. There's no new treatment on the horizon—just the hope that what we have already started works better when my body is doing everything it can to help out.

Thank you for all of your ongoing support—the cards, the meals, the texts and emails, the FB comments I confess I haven't looked at in weeks. It all brings tears to our eyes, and lets us know that we are in this together. You are helping us get through the hardest parts I have experienced since this cancer journey began in 2006.

Love,

Dann

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