The Waiting Game

The number one question I am asked now that chemotherapy is finished is, “So what are the next steps?”

February 6, 2017 By Justin Birckbichler

Truth be told, it’s a lot of waiting.

I’m waiting today for my blood results to come back from the lab.

This is just to check to see if my immune system and other levels have returned. (My white blood cells levels didn’t raise or lower since my last day of chemo, meaning my immune system is functioning, but just barely. I’ll have my levels checked again in a few weeks on February 17 to see if they have improved.)

I’m waiting to feel 100% back to normal physically after the grueling testicular cancer chemotherapy regimen.

As the chemo drugs continue to work internally and exit my body, I still feel a little off. I don’t feel nearly as bad as I did when I was becoming BRATman, but I still feel queasy from time to time. I’ve found that keeping up with my compazine (anti-nausea medicine) every six hours, consuming Queasy Pops (special lollipops used to help relieve upset stomachs,) and sucking on ginger drops has helped cut this down, as has laying on the floor. I know it will take a few months to return to normal, but I’m learning to manage it. My strength and stamina are returning, but going up and down stairs can still result in me being winded from time to time. My hair is now at a nice fine stubble (I would say about 250 grit sandpaper-wise).

I’m waiting to return to work as an elementary school teacher.

Truth be told, I’m not sure when this will happen, but I have a goal date. I was first aiming to return two weeks after chemo was over (on February 13), but with the new information about my cell count, I wasn’t cleared to return until February 20. Adding another week to my time away from work feels wise. Teaching is extremely draining on my energy levels and I’m not where I need to be to keep up with the fast-paced schedule I normally keep when teaching my fourth graders. I’m hoping that during my next blood check, my immune system is stronger to ensure I don’t catch anything from my students. While I don’t want to be away for much longer, I also need to be smart and return when my body is ready.

I’m waiting to find out if chemotherapy was effective against my testicular cancer.

This is probably the hardest to wait on. I have a CT scan on February 25 and will get the results on

March 2. The findings will tell me if the tumors on my lymph nodes have decreased in size, completely disappeared, stayed the same, or spread/grown at all. Right now, my biggest fear is that the tumors have grown. I want to be hopeful, but I also am honest with myself in that this is a real fear for me. The nurses and doctors all seem optimistic, but I'll still be anxiously awaiting these results.

I'm ready to be done waiting on cancer.

I've completed undergoing chemotherapy to cure my cancer. Each Monday, I'll post my thoughts on this experience. These may be reflections on my prior week's treatments, musings about my newly-altered life, or anything else that comes into my "chemo brain." Follow along with all of my posts here.

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