

# My Hardest Words

Category: The Biopsy

written by Sharon Kimble | March 24, 2024

My father exhibited some goofy language errors during a phone conversation, substituting sound-alike words two to three times over a ten-minute period. I called my brother, and we made a seventy-minute drive to take him to the emergency room. The resident physician suspected a stroke, and Dad went for an MRI. Stroke seemed like a pipedream as his symptoms were not clear. The MRI came back, and the resident back-pedaled as the new findings looked more like tumor than stroke. I confirmed what part of the brain was involved, his risk for seizure, and the follow-up treatment plan.

We went out to lunch and started planning. He was mom's caregiver.

The medical plan was for another scan and a neurosurgery appointment. The family plan was to secure care for mom, figure out how we would support appointments, and to have a formal family meeting to discuss his health care directive and long-term plans for mom.

The three siblings and our spouses met at their house. Dad had put some thought into what he wanted. My oldest brother would be the financial Power of Attorney, and I would be his health care decision-maker with the caveat that at least one of the boys agreed with me.

I went with Dad to the neurosurgery appointment. We looked at the scans together. I could tell that he was not comprehending the conversation, which gave me insight into the depth of his cognitive problems. He was trained as a veterinarian and had always understood medical language. I knew then that I was really the one in charge of him. The neurosurgeon pointed out the tumor, which was grey and hazy, not a nice encapsulated little egg. I asked two questions: "Can you tell from the scan if this is glioma?" He said, "We cannot tell that for certain from this scan." My next question: "Can you tell from the scan if this is lymphoma?" He replied, "I can tell for certain that this is not lymphoma."

On the day of the biopsy, we were all there, including mom. In the pre-op area Dad and I met with the anesthesiologist. She asked me his code status. I replied, "He is DNR." She pushed for clarification, "What if he just needs a couple of compressions to adjust a small problem?" I reiterated, "He is DNR."

In my head it echoed, and it still does.

*Sharon Kimble*

*Minneapolis, Minnesota*