

# Waiting

Category: The Biopsy

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | March 1, 2024

A good imagination can be an asset but also a liability. I first discovered that fact in 1974, when I found a lump on my left breast. Three more lumps—another on my left breast and two on my right—reinforced my belief that my creative mind could be my most formidable foe.

The biopsies themselves were fine. Once the IV was inserted—I have a childlike fear of IVs—I could relax in a twilight sleep. Then, however, came the waiting period for the results of each biopsy. Every day crawled by like a month, every minute crept by like an hour, and every night lying in the darkness of my bedroom made me doubt that the sun would ever rise. I imagined the worst possible scenario: malignancy, chemo and radiation, loss of hair, breast reconstruction, and, most devastating, either death or a lifelong fear of relapse.

I was lucky: all four biopsies were negative. Yet, I am never unaware of what could have been: when I have my annual mammogram, the technician must put strips on my four scars in order to get a clear image; when I shower, I can see the thin lines on my breasts—and, with water pouring on me, I say a silent prayer of gratitude.

Several of my friends have not been so blessed. Their biopsies, done on lumps or tumors, have come back with positive results. They have endured my worst nightmare—treatments that have affected them mentally, emotionally, and physically. Yet, these individuals agree that getting the results and undergoing the treatments, as bad as they were, were not as heinous as the waiting period between the biopsy and the physician's call. Waiting leaves us impotent, vulnerable to our darkest thoughts; knowledge, even unwelcome knowledge, lets us take action and feel some degree of control over our lives.

Today, March 1, I had an emergency colonoscopy after a stool test came back with an abnormal reading. Fortunately, no biopsy was needed because everything looked good. Again, however, the wait of just a few minutes for the gastroenterologist to smile and tell me I was fine was brutal.

My biopsies have frightened me, opening my mind to all kinds of dire possibilities. But the waiting periods between each biopsy and the delivery of the results have left me quivering, convinced that a monster does lurk under my bed.

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