

Lady in Waiting

Category: Awaiting a Diagnosis

written by R. Lynn Barnett | August 4, 2025

I've been a "lady in waiting" more than once. A traditional "lady in waiting" attends to royalty—which sounds like a pretty cushy job. But when you're a lady waiting for the results of a biopsy, the task is a royal pain. Waiting for the phone to ring when you're younger often means getting asked out on a date. Then years later, you find yourself waiting for a call from your doctor, to set a follow-up appointment to discuss your biopsy results. As anyone can attest, this waiting period can be a true test of resilience.

Years ago, our dog Mickey was diagnosed with cancer around the same time I was. He had a worse time of it but still came out smelling like a rose. We each had biopsies—out of "an abundance of caution," according to our respective doctors. When the phone rang during the time between our respective biopsies and the word of the results, I'd jump, feeling conflicting emotions. On one hand, I was hoping the call wasn't medically related. But on the other hand, I hoped that if it was, the news would be good.

I'm happy to report that despite positive biopsies for both of us, we were both OK. Mickey put one foot in front of the other and persevered. And so did I. The timing of these diagnoses was so uncanny that it became the germ of an idea for a book I wrote: *What Patients Want: Anecdotes and Advice*. It is musings about some of the not-so-amusing aspects of health care, including the angst of the known, the unknown, and everything in between.

This "lady in waiting" is still waiting for the day when every phone call is positive—but in the sense of "So-and-so is getting married" rather than "So-and-so has a positive lymph node."

Especially in these difficult times, let's all try to be positive, in the former sense of the word.

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