

# Diagnosis

Category: Hospitalized

written by Kathy Miller | June 7, 2025

Dad and I sit in the conference room at Hanover General Hospital when the surgeon knocks on the door and enters. "You must be Eugenia Miller's husband," he says to my father.

"Yes, I'm Harry," my father murmurs while he stands and extends his hand in the direction of the doctor.

"And I'm her daughter, Kathy," I say as I offer my hand.

"I wish I had better news to share with you," the doctor states as he looks in the direction of the window at the end of the room.

He tells us the results of the three hours of abdominal surgery on my mother. Of course, the tissue is being sent to a pathologist to confirm his suspicions, but he is pretty sure the tumor is ovarian cancer. He has removed both ovaries and Fallopian tubes, the uterus, cervix and omentum. My father nods his head after the name of each organ and looks down at the conference table. "Your mother's surgery is complicated because of the scar tissue from her previous abdominal surgeries. I was not able to debulk the tumor completely."

I look up when he says "debulk." I know what that means. Some cancer is left behind. Behind my eyes I see a blob of gray tissue wrapped around what looks to be intestines and liver. The blob grows and quivers as I focus on it. My stomach feels queasy.

"One more thing," the doctor states. This time he looks directly at me. "There is sometimes a genetic link with ovarian cancer. When that occurs, it shows up at an earlier age in daughters and granddaughters. Your mother is eighty-one now. In you it would show up around sixty. I suggest you take this information to your gynecologist and that you seek out a genetic counselor. And if your mother has sisters, they should tell their doctors.

Now I am nauseous.

The doctor asks if we have questions. My father slumps in his chair. His hands shake as they lie on the table.

Back at my parents' house, my father dials the phone. Aunt Norene is on the line. I listen as he tells her my mother has *cervical* cancer. I run into the kitchen to correct him. My father hangs up the phone.

*Kathy Miller*

*Fayetteville, New York*