

It Eats At You

Category: Prostate Blues

written by Dorothy Harsen | June 10, 2018

What is it like to know you have prostate cancer and do nothing to combat it? The medical term for my husband's treatment plan is "active surveillance," but watching and waiting sure doesn't feel very active.

It didn't sound too bad the day his urologist spent an hour with us exploring options. The plan was to recheck Mark's PSA every four months. Imagine our anticipation leading up to his first PSA recheck. And imagine waiting for a week after that without a letter or phone call. Mark finally called the office and got a callback from the nurse saying that his level was stable and there was no change of plans.

We're now seven months into this journey, and it feels like Mark could easily slip through the cracks.

I, on the other hand, was diagnosed with breast cancer over two years ago and underwent surgery, chemo and radiation. I got to *do* something about it. And for the next five years, I get to take a pill every night that reminds me I'm still doing something about it. Many of Mark's friends and co-workers continue to ask how *I'm* doing, not realizing that *he* is the one who is suffering now. It eats at him.

The editor of *Pulse*, Paul Gross, pointed out how many men face this private matter in a private manner. No pink-ribbon rallies (or light blue, as the case may be!) for them. Maybe it's the threat of incontinence and impotence. Maybe it's that men don't want to talk. Maybe the reasons don't matter. Maybe they defy explanation.

All I know for certain is this: Treat everyone you meet with a little extra kindness. You may never know their silent struggles.

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