

My Reprieve

Category: A Ray of Hope

written by Loretta Donovan | December 3, 2023

The year 2020 was epic for me—not because of COVID-19, but because my health was being challenged big-time. I'd had a mastectomy in 2017, and a CT scan had revealed a tiny spot on my right lung; my surgeon ordered annual scans to track it—and two and a half years later it had doubled in size.

Coincidentally, my gynecologist had been following what she'd diagnosed as fibroids; we talked about a hysterectomy, but it wasn't urgent.

By February 2020, everything converged: a positive PET scan, gynecological symptoms, sciatica, and more. By mid-May, hospitals were once again performing surgery that was deemed critical, and I had a hysterectomy. There were no complications, and the pathology report initially looked good.

A week later, I was told that on further examination it appeared I had uterine leiomyosarcoma. I was referred to Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Center in New York City. The physician there was kind and candid. But the prognosis was not good. We began the process of developing a treatment plan, and she said I had about 17 months to live if the pathology report proved correct.

Three weeks later, I underwent lung surgery. The top lobe of my right lung was removed. My Stage 1 adenoma was judged to require no chemo. Two weeks into my recuperation, I met with my MSK specialist for a video consultation, and she delivered the news that extensive tests had proved my uterine diagnosis wrong. I had a rare nonmalignant tumor. Three and a half years later, I am still cancer-free.

Those six months were a test of my body, mind, and soul. I feel fortunate that I had access to the best care. My husband and children gave me strength and support. So did my spiritual beliefs.

I was given a reprieve and now live every day with newfound confidence and serenity.

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