

Late March 2019, during a very busy weekend I experienced three episodes of haematuria (blood in my urine) over a three-day period, the third time it happened I thought this is really odd and took a picture of it. The next morning, I called and made an appointment with my local GP doctor. She was amazing and within no time ordered an urgent ultrasound that showed a mass on my left kidney. I went straight in for an urgent CT scan that confirmed a solid mass on my kidney measuring approximately 8cm. She then referred me to a urologist/oncologist in Miami.

I was very lucky that my cancer was contained to my left kidney so a full removal of the kidney was all the treatment I needed, other than surveillance scans and kidney functions every six months.

My journey lead me to discover a more positive, natural and active me. I was 41 years old when I was diagnosed with Stage 2, Grade 3 Clear Cell Renal Cell Carcinoma (Kidney Cancer). In the weeks leading up to my surgery I continued to work and stay as positive as possible. I am a daughter to two spiritual parents, a mother of two daughters, a wife to a very supportive man, and an extended daughter/sister to his family, a baby sister to two supportive and strong women, and a teacher to many children. My illness was a shock to our family but not one that we allowed to take over or define us.

As I prepared to have a radical nephrectomy (removal of kidney) I learnt to trust and have faith in my doctors my local GP and my urologist/oncologist in Miami. Collecting as much information as possible from them, the Cayman Islands Cancer Society, and the Cayman Islands Cancer Registry. I read a lot and put all my energy into fighting and beating this cancer.

My surgery was very long and a bit complicated but with an excellent medical team, faith, prayers and a lot of support (this girl has an amazing pod of friends, family, and co-workers) I made it through and then it was time to recover. The days ahead of me proved to be very painful, and difficult. As hard as each day was and as much as I wanted to give up some days, I persevered and the pain started to get less and less, I was able to start eating more, and my strength started to increase allowing me to focus on my healing.

Over the next few months, I began to heal well and it was time for my first set of scans. Something that seems so simple created a lot of anxiety, and questions, all of a sudden 'scan anxiety' was something real to me and not something anyone around me other than other cancer survivors could understand.

I then realized that I needed to do more to help myself understand cancer survival ship, and

healing.

The first major change I made was to stop eating red meat, secondly, I started doing yoga and meditation classes, thirdly, I signed up for and completed a Holistic Cancer Coach training online. With all of these changes I began to be and feel healthier both physically, and emotionally.

My hope in sharing my story with others, is to be able to help newly diagnosed patients, cancer patients, survivors and caregivers.

Cancer hit me out of nowhere and kidney cancer I knew nothing about, Organ Cancers are not cancers that we often hear about or at least I didn't. This is something we need to change we need to help all members in our community to understand and learn the risks and symptoms of all cancers.

The emotional journey of cancer affects us all, even if we aren't on the typical journey of chemotherapy, immunotherapy and radiation but together with hope and strength I do believe we can win.

I am very blessed to be cancer-free and as for my scars, well they tell a story. One I believe made me a stronger, wiser, and better human.

'Have courage, stay strong, believe, and choose hope'





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