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More Authentic. Less Schmaltz.

Published on April 20, 2016



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It was a warm breezy Sunday in September 2014 – the sunroof was open and my bike was on the back of the car. The wind wasn't quite blowing through my hair, because it hadn't all grown back yet. I *did* feel great after a 15-mile ride - it made me a bit more confident about my upcoming PET scan. This was the test to see if I was still in remission one full year after finishing months of systemic chemotherapy.

Ironically, it was then I heard the latest spot for Memorial Sloan Kettering. These were the folks who saved my life, so the spot piqued my interest. I was expecting the usual creative approach to hospital advertising – *we care, we're the best, we've done this forever, they saved me or a loved one*, yada, yada, yada.

But I was amazed at what I heard next. It was powerful, not because it played on the heartstrings, but because the simple message was spot-on and instantly connected me to a defining moment in my own battle.

In the weeks between late February and early May 2013, I had been dealing with what I thought was my usual lower back flare-ups. Even when I got my first fever, I assumed it was just a sinus infection from allergies. But night sweats and the decreasing ability to walk immediately sent me back to my primary care doctor. He ordered an MRI – and the waiting began.

I didn't know what I had, but at this point it was serious enough that I couldn't get off the sofa. The following week my doctor had the MRI results. He dropped the C-word, then I dropped the F-word. He told me to get a biopsy ASAP. He also asked me not to Google this because the potential misinformation could send me off a roof.

It took about a week to get my first appointment at Sloan - a week of waiting and wondering. I feared the worst because I felt the worst. My preteen sons didn't know what I was dealing with yet because I wanted to be able to tell them definitive news. But they were fearful. This wasn't the dad who was dragging them out for 10-mile bike rides – this was a guy who had to lay down for rest after a morning shower from the exhaustion of standing up for 10 minutes. The hours of naps and the sweat-soaked clothes when I would awake had them visibly freaked.

In all, it was a little over two weeks between finding out I had cancer and starting treatment for my particular battle. They were the longest two weeks of my life. The news wasn't good – I had lymphoma in my stomach, all over my psoas muscle, my lower spine and my spinal fluid.

The treatment plan was no picnic either. I would stay in New York for months of systemic chemo and 14 spinal taps. That might do the trick – of course if my stomach didn't get perforated from the lymphoma dying off, or if the lymphoma leaving me didn't destroy a vital organ in the process.

However, what was comforting was having knowledge of what we were dealing with and having a plan. I could face my sons with this news. They were taken aback, and seeing me lose my hair was alarming. But knowing this was treatable, that I was in good hands, and that I was a fighter made them feel much better than they did the weeks leading up to my diagnosis. It gave me the strength to fight the fight ahead.

That's why for me the Sloan campaign was spot-on. *More Science. Less Fear.* perfectly captured what me and my family were going through during the horror of the unknown leading up to diagnosis and the hope we had once we had a plan. I'm not only amazed at the work Sloan does in saving lives – I commend them and their agency for arriving on a message that so simply and accurately sets them apart.