

Cancer Survivor Story - Barbara

Barbara knows what being a cancer survivor is all about. With cancer diagnosed three times in the past eight years she knows she will have to live with it the rest of her life. "I am comfortable with my mortality," the retired teacher said. "Throughout my ordeal with cancer I have been able to maintain my quality of life."



Her cancer journey began in 2001 when she was diagnosed with cancer in her right breast. It was a tubular, in-situ tumor which involved 19 lymph nodes and required the removal of her right breast. Two years later her left breast was removed when a pre-cancerous lump was found. Then in 2007 she had a general feeling of tiredness, bladder problems and distended abdomen. She chalked it up to being over 60 and working too hard. But at her yearly doctor's visit when she mentioned the symptoms, her physician did palpitations on her abdomen and found a lump. He first ordered the aspiration of the fluid in her abdominal area and one and a half liters were removed. A sonogram and CAT scan were done and on June 25 her biopsy results indicated she had Stage 4 ovarian cancer.

She chose to have this surgery and follow up services at KU Cancer Center. On July 10 she had a total hysterectomy with removal of her ovaries. In addition, a colostomy was performed. That was followed by chemotherapy during the next seven months, before she had a second surgery in April 2008 to remove tumors from her liver. Her spleen also was removed. She then had six rounds of chemo on the drug Doxil, after which she was off chemotherapy from January through July 2009. After the CA-125 count elevated, chemotherapy was started again. A recent CAT scan has shown that her lesions are shrinking except for one on her liver. "I expect to have another surgery eventually to remove that," Barbara said, "and I will be living with cancer for the remainder of my life."

She thinks of cancer as a chronic disease that she lives with each day. "My circle of cancer people is growing by leaps and bounds," Barbara related. "I am now an advocate for a fellow church member suffering from cancer. We all need someone else to talk to who knows what we're going through."

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