

Updesh's Story

Updesh Nagpal was diagnosed with multiple myeloma (MM) in 2003

I am not sure if my story will be helpful for others but it is the one that gave me a will to set forth on the pilgrimage that I am on at this point.

I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in December of 2003. This was not my first encounter with cancer. I had thyroid cancer when I was 24 years old and just newly married. My thyroid was partially removed and the rest was irradiated with radioactive iodine.

The second time the word cancer came into my life was after doing a routine PAP smear. There were some suspicious cells and I had a cone biopsy done. All was well though and I just keep going back for check ups.

This diagnosis came after about eight months of trying to find out what was causing my shifting bone pain.

I was 39 years old and had two daughters (11 and 9). With my husband's support, I was running a good business and being a very active full-time mom.

The day after the diagnosis I sat inside the car and prayed while my husband took out the girls to eat lunch. I asked for a sign to let me know if things would be okay. At that moment, a seagull flew down and sat on the hood of the car and looked at me. I shook my head and said that this was not the sign I was looking for. The bird flew away. Then a few moments later, in the middle of the day and the middle of December, a rainbow shone in the sky. This was my sign. I had never seen a rainbow in December in the Lower Mainland and I have lived here for over 25 years. I pointed out the rainbow to the girls and my husband. This is what gave me the will to go through the radiation, chemotherapy and the bone marrow transplant.

I guess I was one of the lucky ones to have a lot of support from my family and parents. They moved in temporarily to help take care of my children and me. My family and friends acted very positively. I had a lot of support, prayers from all different faiths and many phone calls.

In December, I underwent surgery to confirm my diagnosis. In January I had radiation. That was probably one of the lowest weeks of my life. I was in a lot of pain and suffered severe vomiting. Then I was put on medications (which I want to forget about) to prep my body for the onslaught of the chemo and the BMT.

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Also, we had to start hunting for a match. Out of my two sisters, I was lucky that one was a match. She happened to be a medical doctor and my angel in disguise.

I had my transplant in April 2004 and five weeks later I was back in my own house. I spent the next 100 days waiting for the 100th day after my BMT. We all counted while going to the BMT Daycare and assumed that it was over after the 100th day.

Now it is two years after my first diagnosis. I am still taking cyclosporine two years post transplant and am looking forward to getting off of it. My pamidronate has been reduced to once in three months instead of monthly.

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I take being a cancer survivor in a positive light. I treat the word cancer like any other disease, like diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure. It is something I have to live with and manage carefully. It is something that I try not to fear and feel that there are many people working to find a cure. Yes I do think about a reoccurrence. I take life on a daily basis and enjoy every day as it comes. There are still good and bad days health wise but I take it in stride and am thankful that I am here to spend it with my family.

And I look for rainbows in the sky.

