



Ribbons to Remember

by Diane Riche

On April 21, 2010, my life seemed "normal" until around 11:00 pm when I found my mother laying on her living room floor, confused and hallucinating.

We called 911 and my life was never the same after that. After four long hours of waiting and wondering, we got a diagnosis... a metastatic brain tumor. It was assumed to be a result of her breast cancer returning eight years later.

A few days following the surgery to remove the tumor, the pathology came back. It wasn't breast cancer but was in fact ovarian cancer. The tests were repeated twice just to confirm, as ovarian cancer rarely spreads to the brain, but still it came back as ovarian cancer.

A whole body scan was done. The results showed cancer in her chest, hip, shoulder, liver and several lymph nodes. Her oncologist was cautiously optimistic yet really would not talk about a timeline. A year or so seemed to be the consensus. Her oncologist said that ovarian cancer usually responds well to chemotherapy treatment so when she started that, we would know more.

Chemo couldn't start until the six-week mark, after she completed the radiation treatments that were still ongoing to treat her brain. After a week in the hospital she finally got to go home. Then we began lining up health care workers, therapists and visiting nurses, as well as getting the equipment she needed because the tumors in her hip and shoulder had rendered them almost useless.

After being home for just a week her hip broke from simply standing up, as a result of the tumor at her hip. She needed immediate surgery. She spent a few more days in the hospital and then a week in a rehab facility before returning home again.

The following week we went to the doctors to have her chemotherapy port put in and I noticed she was acting confused again. Her oncologist did some blood work and we went home. The next day was even worse and I called the doctor to get the blood test results. I was informed my mother was suffering "multiple organ shutdown" and it was suggested I call in hospice.

Diane Riche is the founder and president of the Ribbons to Remember Foundation. They are a partner member of the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, and a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Visit her website at www.RibbonsToRemember.org

After losing her mother to ovarian cancer and realizing the enormous need for ovarian cancer education and awareness, Diane has made it her life's mission to do anything she can to prevent other women from dying from this disease and anymore children having to watch a loved one suffer.

She lives in Cotuit with her amazingly supportive husband who knows way more than he should about ovaries. They have two wonderful grown sons. Diane is eternally grateful for every day and sees each as a gift that so many others aren't afforded.



Remember the symptoms of ovarian cancer:

Bloating

Abdominal, pelvic or lower back pain

Trouble eating or feeling full quickly

Urinary/Bowel changes

If you experience any of these symptoms and they are consistent and persist for more than 2 weeks, please, call your doctor!

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My mother passed away three days later, one day before she was scheduled to begin her chemotherapy and five weeks after being diagnosed.

Losing my mother in any way would have been difficult, but like this?

I think about the symptoms she complained of: bloating, incontinence, bowel irregularities, reflux, shoulder and hip pain... and yet, who would have ever guessed cancer?

Ovarian cancer is called a "silent" killer because it has commonly believed to not present symptoms until it's at a very advanced stage. Research now shows that to be untrue. Ovarian cancer does indeed have symptoms, even at its earliest stages.

The problem is that over 80% of women don't know what the symptoms are, or they attribute them to aging or common ailments such as indigestion, irritable bowel syndrome, or even stress.

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