Jenn’s Journey

I have never been asked to talk or detail my cancer journey… but here we go. Late February 2012 I noticed a lump, so off to my family doc I went. He didn’t seem concerned, but my nurse was. She fast-tracked a mammogram and a week later I was having my “squish” March Break 2012. Then a biopsy… I got the call from my doctor…10:30am on a gloomy March morning…Jenn, I don’t have good news…

I had a titanium clip inserted on the tumour… then met with this very short oncologist and she was so passionate about having me beat this thing! Nadia! She gave me her game plan: 8 chemo sessions 2 weeks apart… with the Red Devil! Needless to say April and the following months went like a blur; tests, tests, TESTS! I met with the surgeon…I had a double mastectomy booked for September… I called a week before the surgery and opted for a lumpectomy. He said that would be fine as the chemo had shrunk the tumour… so surgery was done, and I was very fortunate to have a nurse come by regularly to check on my incisions and take care of my drain. I had a bit of time off. I then had a month of radiation in November.

After all that was done, I was given an estrogen blocker for 5 years… went on with life and hoping this was it. Regular follow-ups and stuff during that time. In 2014 I took it upon myself to have a referral for a partial hysterectomy. My thinking was estrogen gone so I should be good…

Fast track to October 2022… I went for my annual mammogram. They found something was “off” in my other breast (aka formerly known as the good boob!) Seeing as COVID was still very much a concern some of my tests were pushed back or rebooked due to illnesses within the clinics. In February of 2023 I had an ultrasound done. Yes, in fact there is a mass! I was then scheduled for a biopsy… a few days after that I was contacted by the doctor and was told it was back. I was given an appointment with a new cancer crew (aka my team!). We made my plan, and I told her: “Off with them!” I was booked for what I call an amputation…March the 6th. My mom’s birthday. It wasn’t given a second thought, just take the problem off! After the surgery I was assigned a new doctor, however, I didn’t want a new doctor, I wanted the person that had been so helpful the first time. She wasn’t thrilled to see me a second time! (It’s become a thing between her and I!)

She discussed the treatment plan, I had genetics testing done and my type of breast cancer was BRCA1, which is hereditary, carried on my father’s side. Tissue samples were sent to California (I live in Ontario, Canada). The results came back from California: this new cancer DOES have a chance of coming back again so the prescribed treatment was to be 12 weeks of chemotherapy (my scans were clear, this was just to ensure nothing was missed) I did have a couple allergic reactions to the chemo, but it was managed on site at the cancer centre. I then had 6 weeks of red…. BUT I found a silver lining during those 12 weeks…Benadryl has a nice calming effect! Devil (doxorubicin), which was every 2 weeks (those 3 doses were managed well and less than 2 hours long) I did end up needing one transfusion due to chemo educed anemia.

A PET scan is scheduled for this September and that will decide if any further treatment will be needed… like more radiation… YUK!

I maintained a positive attitude and used humour through the entire process. I was at the shop most of the time that we were open, although some days were tiring, most were great. We (my partner Travis and my son) bought a wig…which come to think of it I wore probably only 3 times! At my last meeting with my oncologist, she told me it was very smart to have had my partial back in 2014.

I’d say in conclusion, my message to anyone would be this: If it doesn’t feel right, go get it checked! If you’re met with the “Oh, you don’t meet the criteria yadda yadda” FORCE THOSE TESTS! Breast cancer doesn’t always give you hints. If you feel something in your girls, GO and DEMAND and ultrasound! I was lucky in a way… I had that one nurse back in 2012 that felt herself something wasn’t right, and she forced the tests and expedited and appointment for further examination.

I had a great support system during both of my journeys battling this. That is very important to have. You go through various emotions, from loving life and being a warrior and the next you have feelings of being defeated, and the “why Me’s” take over.

All the tests, jabs, reactions, and medications were worth it… my sons and my partner Travis were my motivating factor to beat this beast.