

Gerry's Story

Gerry was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) in 2002

I was diagnosed with leukemia in September of 2002 and I was 50 years old at the time. I had a very active, full life with my wife and two teenage boys. My initial feeling was that the life we all enjoyed and had become accustomed to was about to end. The truth of the matter was that we all feared the worst. The hardest thing was worrying what my wife and children would have to go through should I not survive. I made up my mind that I could beat this disease with positive thinking and complete trust in my transplant team. My family would not be without me.

Upon meeting with the specialists and social workers, we soon realized that we would be given all the support and medical treatment that we needed to get through this challenge. We also realized that all of our family and close friends were there for us in any way that we needed. This gave all of us a huge amount of determination. We decided, as a family, that we could remain positive through it all and look back on this experience one day as just an obstacle we had to face.

When it came time for me to have my bone marrow transplant (my younger brother was my donor), my wife and I decided that we needed to remain together and therefore she stayed in my room with me and slept on a recliner for the duration. This at least gave us a touch of normalcy and allowed us to draw the strength we needed from each other.

I also decided to wear my own shorts and sleeveless shirts instead of hospital gowns. My wife cut the shoulder seams and rejoined them with snaps so that there was no interference with my Hickman® line. I was definitely more comfortable.

During my treatment, any discomfort and pain that I experienced was addressed so quickly that it was kept to a minimum. It is very important to communicate pain and discomfort right away so that your team can treat it immediately.

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The one thing that being diagnosed with cancer has taught me is to appreciate everything that you do have and don't waste time worrying about the things that you don't have. Never "sweat the small stuff" and always be positive and plan your future.

Being a Cancer Survivor has given me the opportunity to see my two sons enter into the occupations of Professional Firefighter and Paramedic EMT and celebrate with them their accomplishments. I would not have missed this for the world.

It has been six years since my bone marrow transplant and my life is terrific. The only change I have made is that I don't push myself as hard physically.

Occasionally I think about recurrence, but as every year goes by I think about it less and less. I attend the Bone Marrow Transplant Clinic once a year now and I continue to have faith and confidence in their ability to monitor my health.

This experience has made us all realize just how quickly your life can be changed and how important it is to be positive and fight for the strength to survive. It works for us.

I and my family are so grateful to be able to put this all behind us. We have all made up our minds not to dwell on what we went through, but to dwell on what we have yet to do.

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