

Diary of a Cancer Patient

Monday, August 30 – I've been having swelling under my right arm and it is very painful. About a year ago I had injured my rotator cuff when my year old Weimaraner pulled on her leash while I was walking her. But this is something different and potentially more serious I suspect. I called my doctor and made an appointment.

Tuesday, August 31 – There are strange things going on in the area of my right underarm. I feel something moving and shifting into the area of my breast and I am having a lot of pain. I cannot even lift my right arm above my head. There is a mass of something that has moved into the side of my breast. This is definitely more than just an injury. Hopefully I will find out more when I see my doctor. I continue my usual routine and diet. I have gained some weight over the last several years; I weigh 135 pounds and I am five feet five and a half. I have been eating ice cream, cottage cheese and lots of good bread. I don't eat much red meat and I love salads, so I have always thought that I had a healthy diet. I love my coffee, one cup in the morning. And I will have a couple of beers on the weekend. But still everything I do is in moderation. I have never been a person to binge or overdo. I am worried though and not sleeping at night.

Thursday, September 2 – Went to see my Primary Care Physician. I have been a patient of his for at least twenty years and he knows me well. He is a runner and we have similar values I think. He doesn't push meds on me that I don't need. In fact there are posters in his examination rooms saying that taking too many antibiotics is detrimental to your health. My kind of man. He walks into the room and examines my under arm and asks when was the last time I had a mammogram and I said I couldn't remember but that I had been doing breast self exams often and I hadn't felt any lumps until last week. I explained what happened and he gave me a prescription for a mammogram and sonogram. I called as soon as I returned home to make the appointment.

Thursday September 9 – I am going for my mammogram and sonogram. Upon reaching the office, I fill out the papers and wait. They call me soon after and have me remove my blouse and bra and put on a little cape with Velcro fastenings. I have to say that I have always hated mammograms. Because I have always been a thin person and my breasts are small, they have some difficulty putting them in the machine and it has always been quite painful but the machines are newer and my breasts are larger so it isn't quite as bad. The technician took additional pictures of the right breast because of my complaints. I then went into another room for the sonogram. The technician told me to lie on the table. The doctor entered the room. I think he is a radiologist. They put the gel on my breasts and started looking around. I could see the images as he moved the wand over my breasts. My left breast was perfectly clear. Then he moved to the right breast and found the mass on the side of the breast but he didn't think that was cancer. He then moved over the upper center of the breast and said that it looked suspicious and that he wanted to do a needle biopsy. I dressed and walked out making the appointment before I left the office.

Friday, September 10 – I don't know what to make of all of this. It could be nothing and then it could be serious. Not knowing is disconcerting. And then if I find out that it is

cancer, then what. Will I lose my breast? Will I have to have Chemo or radiation treatments or both? I've heard terrible stories about people having chemo therapy; the sickness, the loss of bone density. And all my life I've had small breasts and they have finally grown to a size that is kind of sexy. And now I have to lose one? Bummer. I am not a young woman. Will I lose my vibrancy? But then if it is cancer and I do nothing I will likely lose my life. And I guess I would rather lose a breast and live if that's what it comes down to. At this point I am more or less paralyzed with fear. I need to have more information. Time to get on the Internet. I think that will allay my worst fears.

Sunday, September 12 – Took the dogs to the dog park. It was a beautiful day, a little warm but the sun was shining, the air clear. The dogs all seemed to have more energy today. Somehow they must know that cooler weather is soon to come. I sit at the picnic table with a group that I have known for about a year now. Since losing my job two years ago I have been spending a couple of days a week. I haven't told anyone about this yet except my son who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. I hate having to worry him; he has enough problems with trying to keep afloat in this terrible economy. I think about my dogs and what would happen to them if I should not be here anymore. I got them both when they were little puppies and they don't know anyone else and they have always been together. If something should happen to me I would want them to go to someone who was very wealthy, had acres of grass and maybe a pond with birds to chase for my Brittany.

Monday, September 13 – I worry and think bad thoughts. Got on the Internet to research breast cancer and am learning a lot. It helps to learn what I can about my disease. My needle biopsy is a week from this Thursday.

Thursday, September 23 – This is the day. I shower and put on some comfortable clothes. I arrive at the imaging office early and fortunately they are ready for me and take me right into the room with the sonographic equipment is set and ready to go. The nurse tells me to go into the dressing room and take off my top and bra and that I should urinate before the procedure as I will be on the table for awhile. I sign some papers and we're ready to go, just waiting for the radiologist. I have the same one that did my sonogram two weeks earlier. He comes in and explains in detail what I can expect. He will deaden the area with a Novocain like drug and if it still hurts he said he will give me more. He then inserts a tube into my breast and then puts a needle like device into that tube to extract breast tissue. It was a little painful, but I have experienced worse. He "snipped" from three different places. And then he was done. I asked him what he thought and he was less optimistic this time than before. I asked him if he thought I could have a lumpectomy and he shook his head and said that I would probably need a total mastectomy. Since it was Thursday, the doctor said that the test result would not be back until the following Monday. I put my clothes back on and as I was leaving she said "Have a nice weekend, if you can." Not a good thing to say to me, I thought to myself.

Friday, September 24 – I didn't sleep much. Too worried. I got up today and thought enough of the worrying; it's not getting me anywhere. Evidently I do have Cancer and I need to take action now and not wait for the diagnosis, the sooner the better. Again the

Internet is my savior. I got on-line and started looking at foods that cause cancer and those that retarded cancer cells. I was amazed to find that, even though I had thought that I eat pretty healthy foods, I had been loading up on dairy products sometimes three or more times a day. Milk on my cereal, yogurt in my smoothie for lunch, cheese and crackers for a snack and ice cream for desert in the evening. Then I had also been eating lots of sugar; cookies, homemade lemonade made with sugar. I also looked at the labels on my foods more closely and many processed foods, like mayonnaise, even crackers had processed sugar in them. I also read that juicing can be quite beneficial in getting the antioxidants into your body more efficiently. The key is to not feed the cancer cells, no sugar and to get strong antioxidants into the body as much as you can. I also found supplements that are helpful in strengthening your immune system; CoQ10, Selenium and Flaxseed oil are good.

Time to go to the department store and the health food store. After researching juicing machines I checked to see if Macy's has the one I want and they did. Quick trip to the mall and 150 dollars later I have a juicing machine. I picked up some organic veggies, apples, carrots, celery, beets and oranges. Then on to the health food store for the supplements. Bought CoQ10, Selenium, Flaxseed oil and some herbal tea with burdock root, organic sheep sorrel and some other herbs I had never heard of. And fifty dollars poorer I head home to start my new regime.

I set up the juicer and made an apple, carrot and celery juice. I poured it into a glass and added some cinnamon for flavor. It was good. I can get into this. I opened the flax seed bottle and poured a tablespoon and it was awful. Drank a glass of water with the new supplements. I then prepared the herbal tea and that wouldn't be ready until the next day. Wonder how bad this is going to taste. But who cares if I am keeping the cancer from growing. But do I want to live like this?

Saturday, September 25 – The dog peed on the carpet in the TV room last night. I have two dogs but I know which one did it because the Brittany is still crated at night. Sophie, my Weimaraner must be feeling my anxiety and this is how she expressed it. I will say that I slept better last night and probably didn't respond to her asking to go out. Sometimes, even though I take her out just before bed, like many girls she has to go in the middle of the night. She usually come to the side of the bed and gently puts her cold nose on my hand, but I must have slept through it. Small stuff in the scheme of things.

I continue on my new regimen, oatmeal with blueberries and soy milk for breakfast, orange juice and tea. I am cutting all coffee from my diet even though I love a good cup of black coffee. Taking my supplements. Juice break mid morning, prepared beet, carrot and apple juice this time; delicious. Salad with fresh fruits with organic lettuce for lunch. I am finding it hard to concentrate on anything. I am so worried. I think about the possibility of this cancer taking over my body and killing me. I've lived a good seventy years, but I am not ready to go yet. I have the dogs and I worry what would happen to then should I not be here any longer. I had better start planning just in case. What a morbid thought.

Monday September 27 – The radiologist said that he would call today. I don't want to answer the phone. I don't want to know. But I have to know. I have to face this and fight if it is indeed cancer. At noon he calls and, yes according to him I have stage one breast cancer and he wished me luck. I guess I knew all along. I call my PCP and tell him and he says that he already knew as he gets all of my reports. He recommends a breast surgeon and I call and make an appointment. I call my son in California and let him know. He was expecting it, but he said that it sounds like we caught it early enough. I only hope so.

Tuesday September 28 – I wake in the morning with my new reality. It's difficult for me to wrap my head around it though. A month ago I was just another healthy seventy-year-old-female. And now I have the dread disease of females and some males too. But stage one, that's not so bad. I can be cured. The question now is whether the lumps under my right arm are cancerous as well. And if they are, has the cancer spread elsewhere in my body. If that has happened it would not bode well for me.

I am still on my new diet and supplements and the swelling and pain are now gone from under my arm. It seems that something of what I am doing is working. My main goal here is to keep the cancer from growing and spreading if I can.

Monday October 4 – Another long weekend of wondering and worrying. My appointment with the breast surgeon is 2:45 today. I get up early and go and hike Piestuwa Peak as is part of my exercise routine. I come home and prepare my juice, apple carrot and celery. It is a good thing that I love vegetables and fresh fruits. And so far I don't miss not having coffee. Black tea is quite good. I take the dogs for a walk and then shower and get ready for the doctor appointment. The office is at Greenway and I-17. I make sure that I record my mileage as it is deductible.

I walk into the doctor's waiting room at the SW Breast Center. It is like walking into your mother's living room; all flowered chintz, fake silk flowers and traditional furniture; a comfy couch, Duncan fife dining table and English style upholstered chairs scattered around the large area. Just like home. There are several women waiting for the doctor and I wonder what treatment they are having, what kind of breast cancer they have. I neglected to bring a novel so I am reduced to reading a magazine, but they are all girl magazines, People, Mademoiselle, Good Housekeeping. The magazines that I love, Vanity Fair, The New Yorker, Time or Newsweek are nowhere in sight. I sit down and take notes.

After an excruciating thirty minutes I am called and taken to the Doctor's Office. This is different, I thought. Office is again appointed in early American Traditional furniture, large executive desk, with pictures of the doctor's family. I read the certificates on the wall and he did complete medical school, has won some awards, that's good. A few minutes late he enters the room, gives me a hug and says, "I know you don't want to be here do you?" He's got that right. We talk. I hand him my films from the mammogram and sonogram. He takes notes ask about my general health, comments on how young I look. That's good. Then he tells me to go with the nurse to and examining room. When I

get there I am told to take off my bra and blouse and put on a kind of cape like cotton top, in a floral design. I crawl up on the table and sit and wait some more. A knock at the door and the doctor walks in. He has me lie down on the table and examines my right breast and underarm area. Then does an ultra sound and tells me that he is taking a needle biopsy from the underarm to find out if it is cancerous as well. There's little pain as he has deadened it. He tells me to get dressed and come back to his office. I like that; I like being on more equal terms with the doctor. One feels so vulnerable when you're sitting on the examining table half dressed.

He came back in and sat behind his desk. Okay here it comes I thought. Then he started to explain the different kinds of cancer and how they react in the breast.

1. Ductal carcinoma starts in the tubes (ducts) that move milk from the breast to the nipple. Most breast cancers are of this type.
2. Lobular carcinoma starts in parts of the breast, called lobules, that produce milk.

He talked about the treatment, chemotherapy, radiation and of course surgery and then said that he needed more information before he decides on the form of treatment that I should have and said that he wanted me to get an MRI. He wanted to make sure that he is seeing everything properly. He then gave me some books to read and some pamphlets and told me about a support group that will be of help to me. He gave another hug and said that we would talk after the MRI.

I came away feeling much calmer and that I would be in good hands with this man handling my case. When I went for the appointment I had half expected him to make an appointment for surgery and that would be that. But he appears to weigh all options and look into everything thoroughly. This is the kind of doctor I want.

Saturday October 9 – Went out to paradise Valley to sign up for the Race for the Cure to be held the next day. I had run this race a few years ago when I worked for the Arizona Republic but here I am now a soon-to-be cancer patient participating with so many others. I filled out the form and went to the table and they asked for forty dollars for the general public and twenty for survivors. I told the woman that I had just been diagnosed and she said, “You're a survivor honey. That'll be twenty dollars.” I said that hoped I would be a survivor, but would know more a year from now if I am still here.

Sunday October 10 – The race is today. Fortunately I have been running lately, four mile run/walks. I hope I can finish. Got up early and put on running clothes, shorts, running shoes and pink t-shirt that I got yesterday when I signed up. It is size XXL so I am swimming in it, but it will make a great sleep shirt. They were out of my size. Drove to the area where the race was being held and found a parking place by asking a cop if I could park on a side street where there were barricades and he opened them up for me. Oh, the power of pink, I think. Walked over to the race area. Thousands of people. Found the survivor area and picked a bag of goodies, a hat and other free items. I left the bag

there asking an attendant to watch it for me while I run the race. Put my hat on and walked to the start area. Thirty minutes to race time for the Survivors Race. I started talking to several of the women waiting with me. One woman told me that she had had a double mastectomy but was now totally cured. She also said that her husband had testicular cancer. They had grown up in a mining area and she felt that was how they had gotten the cancer as there was no history of it in either family. I mentioned my doctor's name and she said that her friend had him for her doctor and she thought he was the best. Good to hear.

The race was about to start; everyone on their mark waiting for the gun to go off. I started off with a sprint that very quickly went to a jog. It was a long haul even being a 5K but I was determined to run the whole way and I did. And to think I used to run twenty-six mile marathons. In the last mile the second group that started after ours was passing me, some hot shot young guys and one almost ran over me. But I made it all the way to the finish line where people were cheering all of us on. I felt good. And I thought to myself, I will be here next year running this same race as a true Survivor. Went home and prepared my juice drink; go to fight those cancer cells in my body.

Monday October 11 – I have been waiting all week for the results of my underarm needle biopsy. If these tumors are cancerous, it could be more serious than I had at first thought. It would then be possible for the cancer to have spread to other areas in my body of course making it a bigger battle. I now think sometimes about dying. I think about my son. What would happen to my dogs? I would have to find a home that would take them together they are so bonded to one another. I have books to write and places to go. I am not ready to leave this earth. But there is a possibility.

The doctor calls. The tumors are somewhat cancerous he says. I don't know what that means. At any rate I am now going for an MRI a week from this Thursday; he wants to make sure there is nothing else in this area that could be trouble. Then he said he wants to see me in his office and we will talk about a plan of action.

Friday October 15 – Another weekend. I spent the week thinking about my cancer. I still can't believe this is happening to me. No cancer in the family. I take care of myself. I am not over weight. I don't smoke and don't drink excessively. And yet it is there; there is no denying it. And then I play the what-if game. What if I had gone for a mammogram last year; I hadn't had one in a few years, I didn't like them, didn't think I needed to have them. If I had caught it earlier it would have been easier; a little radiation or lumpectomy. But now it looks like a full mastectomy.

I am on the Internet every day now researching foods for cancer, cures and everything about breast cancer. I still keep thinking that I should not be having this. But then I find that one woman in eight in the US get this disease. Why? I pull up a map of the world with cancer statistics and in the industrialized nations, US has the highest rate, followed by France and the Nordic countries. But in China it is now one in 5,500. It has increased as they have adopted more Western foods. Canada and Australia 60 in 100,000. But one thing is clear the US leads in breast cancer cases. Now this is not hereditary. This is

environmental. Some think it could be our dairy products. Could be our beef, pork and even chicken; animals that are fed growth hormones, antibiotics. Pesticides on our fruits and vegetables. The air we breathe. The water we drink, with fluoride and chlorine. It seems that there is no escaping. I think back to the good old days before the factory farms when our food was natural and healthy. But we had other diseases then, small pox, diphtheria, polio, rheumatic fever and more. So at this time in our history, cancer is our nemesis.

I also think about these tiny cancer cells and how they are able to conquer us in such a devious way by taking over our healthy cells until we succumb. It is diabolical.

Monday October 25 – I have an appointment with the primary care physician for a complete physical, a wellness check-up they call it. Normally this would be routine for me but today I am apprehensive. What else will he find; cancer in some other area? I have been working on getting my weight down and exercising so the blood pressure should be back to normal. I drive to the doctor's office and sign in. They know me well by now. Another half hour wait and I am called by the nurse weighed in and taken to a room. The nurse takes my blood pressure and it is 150 over 90. That can't be right and I tell her so. She brings in a different cuff and it is back down to the 120/80 where it should be. Doctor comes in and we go through the routine, pap smear, pelvic exam. He says everything seems to be normal. They monitor my heart, take blood and tell me that I am healthy. Yeah sure, except that I have cancer. That's not so healthy.

Thursday October 28 – Call from the PCP office and my pap test is normal. This is good news. Next is the appointment tomorrow with the oncologist. I even hate saying the word. I never dreamed I would be going to one.

Friday October 29 – This is the day. I will find out what type of treatment I will be getting. I am very nervous. I have business downtown at the County Recorder's office. I drive down and find the building on South 3rd Ave. and drive around trying to find a place to park on the street. I finally park four blocks away and walk. I need the exercise. Well not really I ran four this morning. I finish my business and head over to the doctor's office. It is right across the street from Banner Hospital. That figures. I find the office and check in. More forms to fill out. Would seem that they could put this info on line so I wouldn't have to fill out a form every time I go to a new doctor. I sit in the waiting room. I notice that there are two air purifiers in the room. Makes sense in an oncologists office. There are half a dozen people waiting to see their doctor. So many people having cancer. I am called and taken to a large room with some easy chairs and pillows, the chemo Room I take it. The nurse asks me about my medical history. No, no history of breast cancer in my family. My mother lived to be eighty-eight; father died early due to defective heart from rheumatic fever. Grandparents lived to be in their ninety's. I wonder if I'll make that. The doctor meets with me and talks about different alternative treatments, one being a pill that I would take for five years and not do the chemo treatment at all. I am listening intently. I am sure he knows what is best, or does he. He then tells me that I need more tests and he needs to see if he can get a more definitive answer from the biopsy as to what kind of cancer I truly have. In other words they don't

have a diagnosis after all this time. I then go home and research on this drug called Arimidex <http://www.chemocare.com/bio/arimidex.asp> and the side effects are many. I decide that I am on the wrong path. I have another appointment with another breast surgeon on Monday for a second opinion. I will see what she has to say.

Monday, November 1 – I am almost late for the appointment. The doctor is way out in North Scottsdale and I had trouble finding her office. Talk about stress; my blood pressure will be way up there. But I find it in time, if I were late they were going to charge me for the appointment and reschedule. What a crock.

Anyway, different doctor, female this time. Office very new and modern, décor is oriental eclectic, I like it. I am taken in immediately to the exam room, no waiting an hour or so. The nurse takes my vitals and my blood pressure isn't that bad, 130/80. I tell her I am a runner. The doctor comes in and gives me a hug and then sits down with me and we talk. She had digested all of my records including the past couple of months. She has me change into the cape for examining my breasts; it is purple and feminine. I notice those things. After doing the breast exam, she gives me the straight talk and says that this has gone on too long and that we need to get treatment started. She said she is putting me on a fast track. And I agree. She also was dismayed that we didn't have the full information from the biopsy. She tells her nurse to set up appointments, another biopsy, a pet scan (full body scan). And then she asked if I wanted to see another oncologist and I said yes, that I would. So she sets up an appointment with a woman doctor whom she works with often. She tells me about the radiology team at the Breast Center at JC Lincoln North and how talented they are.

This doctor will use a similar treatment of chemo therapy first but will re-evaluate when the treatment is complete. Instead of saying that I will have a full mastectomy, she said we will make that determination when the time comes. I leave the office feeling like I am finally getting results. And I feel much better with women on my team. I don't think men can fully understand what women are going through with this disease.

November 4, Thursday – I drive up the JC Lincoln North for another biopsy and an appointment with the new oncologist. The biopsy goes without a hitch, they seem so much more professional, applying techniques to prevent bruising and they are thorough. They also do a mammogram afterward to take a picture of the markers that are put into the breast during the procedure to let the doctors know the region of the cancer. What a difference from where I had the first biopsy.

I meet with the new oncologist at noon. Her office is whimsical serendipity, makes you feel happy. Again the wait was not that long. The office people are friendly and helpful I am taken into the exam room and again they take my vitals. The doctor comes in soon. We talk and she says that we need to wait for the biopsy and PET scan test and then we will decide on treatment. I really like her. She's warm and compassionate and she has a great personality. Is she good at what she does though? I will get more info. But I go home feeling much better. I think about how long I have been at this since the first biopsy, early September and I am just now getting results. It has gone on too long. And If

I hadn't been doing the juicing and taking the supplement this cancer would have been spreading.

November 5, Friday – I go to another imaging facility for the PET scan, full body scan. I am nervous. I don't know what the outcome will be. I have all my reproductive organs and the cancer could conceivably have spread by now. I hope not.

The test takes a couple of hours. They put a solution in your veins and you wait twenty minutes for it go through your body and then they place you in this huge machine and scan your body for another twenty-five minutes. It is uncomfortable, your arms are over your head and my right arm with the rotator cuff problem is aching and my hands are loosing their feeling. But finally they are done and I am on my way back home again.

My new doctor calls around five with results from the biopsy. That was fast. She has a very ominous voice and tells me that I have lobular invasive breast cancer, a type that can easily spread. It doesn't sound good.

I sit down and have a beer even though I shouldn't be drinking any alcohol.

November 6, Saturday – I take the dogs to the dog park and then I come and try to busy myself with cleaning some cabinets and try not to think about what the doctor said. But it is on my mind. And then I worry about how the PET scan will turn out. I think again about leaving this earth, what will my family do, will my dogs have a good home. Somewhat depressed.

November 7, Sunday – I take the dogs on the canal for a run. Then come home and finish the cleaning I had started yesterday. I do some shopping for food at Sprouts. My good friend comes over later and spends some time with me. I am not in a happy mood but I don't talk about it. I call my son just to talk with him and tell him that I have a new doctor and all of the things that have happened since. I don't tell him what the doctor told me on Friday. I don't want to worry him and I don't have all the information yet.

November 8, Monday – I was going to climb the mountain this morning but I am too tired. I didn't sleep too well last night. I am seeing ghosts and I get on line and call MD Anderson in Texas to make an appointment. Maybe I need the best in the country to manage my case. I later find out that my insurance will not likely cover me out of state so I scrap that idea. Kind of flailing right now.

I go to the new oncologist for my appointment to find out the results of the other test and the treatment plan. When I walk into the doctor's office, she is there and asks how I am feeling and I say not so well. Then she says that I will feel better soon. That's encouraging. When she comes in to talk to me she tells me that this type of cancer can be dealt with successfully. The PET scan came back with good results no apparent cancer elsewhere although I do have a small node on my thyroid gland that needs to be looked at. I feel better. She makes an appointment for the MUGA scan on Tuesday, the surgeon will implant the port on Wednesday and I will start on chemo therapy on Thursday. I tell

her that I am very concerned about the chemo therapy but she says that they have new drugs now and the worst part is loosing my hair. The day after the chemo I will have to come in for a Neulasta shot to boost my white cells in my blood. And they have medication for the nausea. I will start losing my hair after a couple of weeks she told me.

Wednesday November 10 – I have a friend drive me to the outpatient surgery clinic to have my port put in. We arrived at 8:30 and wait for an hour and finally I am taken back to the prep area where change into a gown and they check my vitals and prepare me for the surgery. The doctor comes in to talk with me and then the anesthesiologist does as well. He is the most important person in the room. He asks if I want to be partially awake during the procedure and I say no, put me out.

I am wheeled into surgery and given the drug to knock me out. As I am drifting off I think of endless fields of powder on the ski slope and drifting effortlessly down the mountain in ecstasy.

Seeming like hours later, only a couple, I wake and my friend comes in to stay with me in recovery. She is the best giving up the better part of her day to be with me.

I am soon on my way home and feeling okay, maybe a little tired. I don't think I'll climb the mountain today.

Thursday November 11 – It is chemo day. The procedure takes about two hours. They start with saline, add the hard chemicals and then some Emend for the nausea. I can feel them chemical reverberating in my body immediately. I drive home feeling a little shaky but not too bad.

Friday November 12 – I go back for my Nuelasta shot. I take my Emend for nausea.

Saturday November 13 – Feeling really bad. Dry mouth, some nausea, very tired. I drink water every hour and keep track of the amount I am drinking. I eat small bites of food every hour as well. Nothing really appeals to me but bananas seem to sit well. I have soup for lunch. I was constipated on Friday so I take the laxative recommended by the doctor and soon I have diarrhea, but better than being constipated. I am amazed that I am having to take all of these remedies. I have never even had these medications in the house. I haven't needed them. But here we are. And I keep thinking about how, along with the cancer cells, my good cells are being destroyed.

Sunday November 14 – I am climbing the walls. I can't sleep, I can't sit still, I am pacing, nashing my teeth. Something is wrong. I call my doctor and she says it's just nerves. I hang up and the symptoms persist. I can't continue like this. I call the doctor again and tell her that I am going to emergency and she tells me to go ahead. I call my good friend and he is there in twenty minutes to take me to emergency. I tell the admitting nurse that I am having an adverse reaction to chemo. She finds a room. They take my vitals and put an IV in and within minutes I am sleeping and calm. I go home with a prescription and I am feeling better.

Tuesday November 16 – I have been running a temperature since Sunday. The doctor tells me to just take Tylenol which I do and the fever persists. I am worried that I will have to take Tylenol all throughout this ordeal and it will harm my liver and I tell her this. She keeps saying that she wants to help me but doesn't know what to do. She is upset and I have to tell her to calm down. I decide to go to my primary care physician. He tells me that likely I had a reaction to the nausea medication and that it should be changed. Makes sense to me. I tell him about my temperature being elevated and he prescribes an antibiotic. So simple, why didn't my oncologist do that?

Wednesday November 17 – I have an appointment with my oncologist. I have documented questions to ask her. I tell her what my PCP told me and she just shrugs it off. She says that I am not handling this very well. I am amazed at what she is saying and decide that I need a different doctor. This one is not helping me.

I get fitted for a wig. Not a happy thought. So far my hair is still in place but it will soon be gone. Yesterday I had it cut short so that I wouldn't have to deal with long hair falling out. Haven't had short in years and I kind of like it, but it soon will be gone. My new wig looks much like my real hair, but I am sure people will know it's a wig.

I am so tired. No energy whatsoever, but the nausea is diminishing.

Friday November 19 – I go to my breast surgeon and tell her that I am changing oncologists. She had recommended the one I had and she wasn't happy to hear what I had to say about her. But unfortunately I think these doctors all stick together. When I get home again I call another oncologist and set up an appointment. I had actually seen this one once before, so he knows me and hopefully he will take me back. The appointment is for next Tuesday.

Sunday November 21 – Starting to feel a little better. I am having less nausea and my nerves have settled down. I think that is because I am not taking any nausea medication now. I am taking ginger root when I feel the nausea coming on. Starting to eat bigger meals. I now have to pack in the food while I can to build myself up for the next round of chemo. I do not want to lose too much weight.

I have a Tai Chi class at the Y at 2:00 PM. I head over to that part of town. Still shaky. I do some shopping at the mall and then go to class. Don't know if I will last. I lie down on a couch in the lobby for a few minutes before the class starts and doze for a few minutes. When I wake up I am feeling a little stronger. I go into the class and tell the teacher that this is my first Tai Chi class and that I am a cancer patient. She tells me that I will reap wonderful benefits from this discipline. The class starts with deep breathing and we do two poses, using our arms and concentrating on our chi, the center of our bodies. More poses, some meditation and the class ends. I am so much more relaxed. I think I have found something wonderful.

Tuesday November 23 – I meet with my new/old oncologist. I apologize for dumping him the first time around and explain why I am back. We talk about my bad reaction. I had been thinking that it was the Emend that had caused the adverse reaction but when we talked we determined that it was the other nausea drug that caused it, called Prochlorperazine. I can't even pronounce it. He said that he can prescribe another drug called Zofran. He examines my tumors and they are definitely shrinking with just the one treatment and that is encouraging. He schedules the next three chemo treatments, each two weeks apart. This is aggressive treatment and what I need.

Wednesday November 24 – I have an appointment for acupuncture today. I have heard that it can help to sooth nerves and with the nausea. This is a first for me. I stop at the pharmacy on the way to pick up my new prescription and the pharmacist tells me that the new medicine is \$400.00 and my insurance won't cover it although they are trying to get an override. I am upset at this.

I arrive at the office, fill out paper work and then I am directed into another room with a large comfy chair and a table. I am directed to the chair and the acupuncture person explains a little about acupuncture in general and what it going to occur. He then starts putting the small needles into two places on my wrists and two places on each leg midway between the knee and the ankle. He then tells me to relax and sleep if I can for the next thirty minutes and leaves the room. I try to sleep but my eyes always pop open when I hear the slightest noise. Finally I do doze off for a few minutes of light sleep. He then comes back and removes the needles. I thank him and I am out the door into the busy world again. I then drive to my oncologist office to see if we can resolve the meds issue. I talk to the nurse and she said they will take care of it and we should get the override and if we can't there are other drugs I can take. Somehow I have faith.

When I arrive home, I am frazzled. I don't think the acupuncture is worth the time and effort. It seems to be more psychological than anything. I don't think I will continue.

Thursday November 25 – It is Thanksgiving Day and my son is arriving at three from the Bay Area. I have to clean the house. There is a free house cleaning service available to cancer patients called Cleaning for a Reason. I signed up but they were full and couldn't come out to clean my house this time around. I decide to take the dogs on the canal for a short run and then come back and clean the house. Obviously my energy level has gone up and my appetite is good. I am packing in the food, with a cereal snack before I go to bed at night. It is difficult eating foods high in calories when I can't have any sugar or dairy.

The dogs are watching the Kennel Club Dog Show while I clean. They are so cute.

My son arrives a little late and we drive home from the airport to enjoy a pleasant time together.

