

In November 2008, I found a small lump in the outer quadrant of my left breast. As I drank a fair amount of diet coke, this was not unusual. The lump went away as quick as it came. The last week of December, the entire side of my left breast was swollen and hard. I already had a mammo scheduled for early January, where they found a 13 cm mass as well as an 11 cm one. I had a biopsy that day. It was cancer. While at RCC one day, I met Heather Stempka. She invited me to Linked by Pink, which turned out to be a lifesaver. Even though I am a nurse, I knew little about cancer. I had no real family history, so I was lost. LBP became not only a forum for support, but a place to get honest answers to my many questions. After 14 rounds of chemo, a bilateral mastectomy, 35 rounds of radiation and a total abdominal hysterectomy, cancer was behind me.....or so I thought.

In January of 2013, my right shoulder began to hurt. As I have lupus, I assumed that was the cause of the pain. I walked around work with an ice pack on my shoulder for 6 months. On July 1, an orthopedic surgeon friend of mine scheduled me for a bone scan. I had been following up with oncology, but the process seemed to be dragging. My shoulder lit up like a Christmas tree. Cancer had returned. I walked out into the waiting room and burst into tears when I saw my mom. For some naïve reason, I felt since I had been so aggressive, it would not return. Within a couple months, it had invaded my liver as well as other boney areas. As of January 7 of this year, I have been on chemo for over a year. Since I am a stage IV, remission is my hope. There have been so many hospital admissions, I have long ago lost count of how many. I fight every day for my incredible special needs son, my amazing husband, my wonderful mom as well as myself. Linked by Pink has continued to stand by me through this phase of my journey as well, something I am very grateful for.

~ Wendy Smith  
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