

Fight like a “Jedi” Judith Lillie Fights Pancreatic Cancer



Judith Lillie knows the statistics when it comes to pancreatic cancer, but she's determined to beat the odds. As her sister told her, "you have to fight this like a "Jedi". Judy was diagnosed with stage III pancreatic cancer in October 2010. From that moment on, she realized her life would be completely changed forever.

It all started when Judy began experiencing some pain in her abdomen. She has a family history of gall bladder problems, so she immediately thought that must be the problem. At first, as suggested by her doctor, she changed her diet, but she still kept experiencing the pain. Finally, her doctor sent her to a gastrointestinal doctor in Dunkirk, New York who sent her for some scans and tests which ruled out gall bladder and stomach ulcer problems. That's when Judy started to worry and decided to do her own research.

She logged on to "WebMD" and narrowed the problem down to her pancreas. She was pretty confident the diagnosis would be pancreatitis. After one more scan she heard the devastating words, "You have a mass on your pancreas". The words left her feeling scared to death. She found it hard to accept and didn't know what to do next.

Judy was referred to a cancer hospital near her home town. That hospital reviewed her records and sent her to another hospital to perform a biopsy on her pancreas. The biopsy revealed she had cancer. Even worse, she was told that due to its location, her tumor was inoperable. The doctors suggested to start a chemotherapy regimen and see how it goes.

Knowing her cancer couldn't just get cut out, Judy felt extremely frustrated. So, like her sister told her, it was time to fight. She went in search of a second opinion. While searching the web for answers in the middle of the night, she came across cancercenter.com. Right away she was impressed that someone

was up and willing to chat online 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. After exchanging some initial information, Judy was on the phone the next day during her lunch break with her OIS rep Margo.

Judy decided to make the trip to Philadelphia for her three day evaluation. Right away she felt some of the weight taken off her shoulders. "I felt I handed over all responsibility to Margo," said Judy. "It felt like I got on this train, I don't really know where it's going, but I know I'm on the right track. After that first visit to CTCA, I felt extremely confident in my decision to get a second opinion."

Judy started treatment at CTCA in Philadelphia in October, 2010. Dr. Klimant is her medical oncologist. One of the first things she noticed is how all the members of her care team work together. She appreciates the fact that they all know what's going on with her. Many people have asked her why she's traveling so far for the same treatment that was offered closer to home. Judy explains, "those other hospitals offer the same drugs, but they could never offer the same treatment I'm getting at CTCA in Philadelphia."

That treatment is what her care team is providing through their whole-person approach to medicine. In addition to the care provided by her oncologist, Judy's naturopathic doctor has provided a number of supplements she feels are really helping her minimize the symptoms of the disease and the side effects of the chemotherapy treatments. Her nutritionist has been very helpful in keeping Judy eating well. Having access to mind/body & spiritual professionals is another plus. Now Judy can focus on enjoying life while she battles her cancer.

Judy also has the support network she needs to help her heal. Three times a month, her husband Thomas makes the trip with her to Philadelphia. He does everything and anything she needs during their stays. He calls himself her gopher. She also has her daughter, good friends and a sister-in-law who check in on her regularly and continue to offer any help that may be needed. Her employer has been extremely supportive by allowing Judy to continue working from home and while she travels to the hospital. All this has helped her worry less and focus more on getting better.

Judy says cancer has actually helped her put her life into perspective. She feels somewhat blessed by the experience. She says it took being sick to really understand what's important in life. She has been spending more time with her daughter and her grandson, and although her three sisters and twin brother all left their home town and headed south many years ago, they do return home to visit and spend a little time up north. Judy is expecting a lot of visitors this summer.

She didn't go out looking for a fight, but Judy realizes she is now in the fight of her life. She is grateful to have "team CTCA" in Philadelphia on her side. With the help of her care team, she's looking to beat cancer for good.