

INQUIRY INTO GYNAECOLOGICAL HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA

Concetta Nikolovski

What Cancer means to some of my family and friends.

Below are contributions on what a select few of my family and friends have kindly contributed. They are not Ovarian Cancer sufferers, however I thought it was important from my perspective that the sentiment is a great snap-shot of what I have felt and what I have experienced, just to give you some indication. Views and feelings are different depending on the experience with any Cancers.

David P 57 Years Old British gentleman

A common disease in many forms where each form receives different amounts of funding for research and treatment ie some forms of cancer are high-profile and receive more attention than others.

My Attitude towards Cancer: Both grandparents and own father died of cancer.

My mother is one of 13 siblings, both her parents and most of her siblings died of cancer (83 Year Old English)

Her attitude: She believes in early detection.

Judy F 28 Years Old Australian woman

Cancer is obviously a disease that appears not to discriminate. I have had a lot to do with Cancer in my life as my brother-in-law, father-in-law, 2 close friends and my mother passed away as a result of cancer.

My mum passed away 3.5 years ago after about a 10 year battle with cancer, so obviously it impacted her life significantly. (She would have been 64 now).

My Attitude: After nursing my Mother full-time for 3 years at the end of her 10 year battle with cancer, I have learnt to appreciate how cancer has adjusted my value in life and the body we live in. There is no use in anger or attitude towards something we (and even our high tech bureaus) don't even know how to prevent let-alone cure. Best you can do is to appreciate the bodies we live in now.

Cancer probably changed my mum's attitude towards life (as you would expect) and impacted all around us. Mum's attitude was to beat it!

Fiona T 38 Years old Australian born Maltese woman

My understanding of cancer is that if a candidate is diagnosed with the illness relatively early, then with treatment, there is a good chance that the patient will survive. However if the illness is detected at later stages, then the chance of survival is minimized. My aunt died of lung cancer. She had an operation and was told that all the cancer was taken. Unfortunately no further treatment was given after the operation, and 6 months later she developed cancer in the lymph nodes and died 3 months later. It was too late to treat her as she was too sick.

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My attitude towards Cancer: I am scared of Cancer. As I am approaching 40 and my husband is approaching 50 I worry that we may develop the illness. I also worry that other family members may also develop the illness, as so many people seem to die of it these days.

My mother 63 Years old Maltese has mammograms on a regular basis. Her own mother developed breast cancer, so she feels that she maybe a possible candidate. Her own mother was operated on and she lived a few years after the operation. My mother also lost a sister with Lung Cancer.

Both of my grandmothers are no longer living. My Father's mother died of stomach cancer. It was diagnosed only 3 weeks before she died, while recovering in hospital from a broken arm. She also had osteoporosis. My mother's mum had breast cancer, and ended up dying of a heart condition.

My mother is scared of Cancer.

Koula Tsiapias 27 Years Old Greek Woman

Cancer is a condition affecting a lot of people so it is most common these days.

My attitude: Cancer can be overcome if people understand that it does not mean the end of life. There are ways that Cancer can be beaten but people must fight their own battle.

My mother is 53 years old and has experienced the death of some close friends. Her attitude towards Cancer: Several of friends have died from Cancer and it is a very serious condition. People should get treated and supported during this time.

Paola's Girlfriend 1. 33 Years old Argentinean Woman

Cancer is a very frightening word. Cancer to me means cells growing and dividing rapidly out of control.

My attitude: That I would like there to be more research towards helping individuals who don't get a chance to fight it because it's growing too quickly.

My mother is 55 years old; cancer means a terrible word as she is one of the lucky people to fight it.

Her attitude is to be strong and fight til the end.

Paola's Girlfriend 2. 37 Year old Greek Woman

It is a terrible illness that may result in a very slow and painful death.

My attitude: To be honest I don't think about it that much.

My mother 59 years old saw first hand how terrible cancer is. Her best friend passed away after a difficult battle with cancer and my mother was at her bedside.

Her attitude: Cancer reminds of her loss.

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My grandmother 89 Years old, knows many friends/family members that have passed away from cancer. She considers it a terrible illness.

My grandmother's attitude: No-one is safe from cancer.

Paola M 39 Years old Chilean woman

My immediate reaction "O God! I/He/She is going to die"

It brings up feelings of despair, that there's nothing you can do about this. It's like the best army of doctors can't win this for you. There's a 50-50 chance if it's been detected in its early stages. But that depends on the type of cancer. And, if it's hit 2 organs you better start making funeral plans. It's an awful thought.

When my father was diagnosed with colon cancer, I cried like he had already passed away. I was a feeling a "loss" and had pains of "mourning". At that stage he hadn't even gone to see the specialist. But we'd been told he had cancer. If you know someone with cancer you keep imagining the Grim Reaper following them around, just waiting for that moment.

My attitude towards Cancer: When I was 19 a friend died of cancer and 3 years earlier my girlfriend's 8 year old brother died of cancer. By the time I was 22 I was sure that I would die of one type of cancer or another.

Today I believe that people with cancer have a better chance now than 20 years ago but that's with some cancers only. If I get it, I'm off to Cuba. I have a better chance of beating it with their treatments

My mother 64 years old, Chilean.

It's a death sentence if it happens to her.

Her Attitude: But you can fight it today. Lots of people have survived this". If it happens to someone else.

My grandmother died at age 64.

Cancer means Pain, Loss, and Horror

Her Attitude: It's a death sentence

Paula D 33 years old Australian born woman with European parents.

Cancer to me is something very scary and serious.

My attitude is that Cancer means early detection, looking for signs and being tested

To my mother 68 years old and grandmother of 92 European share similar views in that Cancer means a great fear where people die but can be prevented with early detection.

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Rita C mid to late 20's young woman

I was born here, have parents of Italian descent, have experienced the loss of my father who lost a battle to bowel cancer. This experience has changed the person I am and was. Cancer is disgusting, dehumanizing and unfair, it doesn't discriminate and many of them are terminal.

My attitude towards Cancer: All the above and that more needs to be done, to find out cause and cure. More assistance needs to be given and the MED's should not be in it for the money.

My mother and grand-mother are of the same opinion.

Unknown Contributor – C Webb 41 Years old Australian

Cancer to me means a serious condition requiring immediate attention.

My mother 73 years old has not had any personal experience but very aware.

Mercedes R 54 Year old South American woman

I see Cancer as Sorrow and my attitude is to treat it very seriously. Check-ups and look out for the signs.

My attitude towards Cancer: Be aware, and prepare, can happen to any of us.

Josie D 51 Italian woman

Long illness but with light at the end of the treatment.

My attitude towards Cancer: Horrible sickness – I hate being sick.

My mother 76 years old sees it as painful death.

Attitude: Death

Lana 39 Years old Macedonian/Orthodox woman

Lana has recently diagnosed with Breast Cancer and has just received her first dose of Chemotherapy.

Lana approached me when she learnt of her diagnosis for moral support. She watched me from the side-lines while I went through my cancer journey and felt comfortable sharing her discovery with me, but reluctant to discuss with just anyone.

Cancer is a serious disease that affects a lot of people (men, women and children) and their families in more ways than one. It's a disease that challenges a person's physical and mental stamina and can bring a whole new outlook on life and its meaning.

My attitude to Cancer: It's a rollercoaster ride – you will have good days and some bad ones (after all we are still human). Maintaining a positive attitude is important for physical and mental

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wellbeing and hopefully with a bit of luck and good treatment cancer will be beaten. So, it's GUNS UP AND SANDBAGS DOWN!!!!!!!!!!!!

My Mother is Macedonian/Jehovah Witness.

My mother also understands that it's a serious illness as she went through the experience with me when I was diagnosed with a Wilms tumor (malignant) on the kidney at the age of 3 years. She knows that breast cancer these days is extremely treatable and curable in a lot of cases. She has personal friends that have been through it and are still alive today.

My mother's attitude: She also maintains a positive attitude that with good help and support it can be beaten and difficult days can be overcome. Her religious beliefs also help to keep her strong and have faith.

My grand-mother is about 86 years old. Difficult to say as I haven't spoken to her in years (she lives overseas). Generally a positive strong person. I believe she views cancer as any other life threatening disease ie diabetes, heart problems, strokes etc.

Grand-mother's attitude: Do as the Doctor recommends. Take the right medication/treatment and live everyday as normally; don't allow any illness to get you down.

Helen 61 Year Old Greek woman

Cancer means Sorrow and possible death. Helen lost her brother from Lung Cancer 10 years ago. He only lived 1 month after diagnosed with Lung Cancer.

One of her friends has survived her battle of early stage Breast Cancer.

Helen shared with me that she goes to a naturopath who identifies weaknesses in the body by using a machine. The machine then prints out the remedies. She is extremely happy with this form of consultation and has referred many friends to this type of medical attention.

Jane W 34 Year old South African woman says that she feels Sorrow and Pain when confronted with the word Cancer.

Chris M 36 Year old Australian woman sees Cancer as "Disease", "Unhealthy" and "Death" She lost her father recently of Cancer and her mother is currently being treated for Cancer.

Dijana C 39 Year old FYRMacedonia views Cancer as "Unstoppable Growth" and knows it as a common problem, almost acceptable as norm.

Her mum of 61 years of age, views it as "Horrific pain and suffering" and she says "What hasn't killed you, makes you stronger".