

During the past twelve years of cancer survivorship I have amassed huge quantities of quality knowledge and experiences. As a former educator, advocate, and LAF local army leader my personal action plan is to educate my community about cancer and LAF and the resources they offer. To me personally the Knowledge is Power component is first and foremost the most important. I share with people things I learned the hard way. I dispel mis-information. I provide resources for recent good information such as the nih.gov or cancercare.org and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. When I speak at these workshops I stress the each person is the first line of defense for catching cancer at its early stages. One myth which incidently caused my misdiagnosis and cost me the chance of early detection is "You're not old enough to have breast cancer." When I went to Austin in 2006, Washington in 2007, and Ohio in 2008 for Survivors Summit and Livestrong Day. I was bowled over by the number of people telling me the age their cancer presented. In Ohio I met at least five men in my small group of 100 who had been diagnosed with testicular cancer at ages between 18-22. The cancer community tries to box us all into their idea of who gets cancer, when and how to treat it.

You are the first defense line in early cancer detection. Be aware of your body. Know your family history and write it down. You know your body better than anyone else. If something does not feel right and it last for a couple weeks you should seek medical attention. Make sure you write down the symptoms, how often they occur and when. Anything unusual for you. For example, bloating, swelling, bleeding, pain, fatigue, inability to swallow, stomach filling fast. rapid weight loss etc. When you get into the doctor discuss your list of symptoms and your family history. Make sure the doctor is listening to you. Ask what tests, bloodwork, medicine do we need to do to determine the cause of your symptoms. Make sure the doctor listens to you and communicates with you. If you feel uncomfortable because of the way the doctor is or is not communicating go to another doctor. This relationship especially in the oncology field is majorly connected with your dianosis, treatment and survival.

Be aware. Very aware. Do your homework on what these symptoms might be. Knowlege is Power---Patient Power