

Cancer Treatments

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I'm watching prime-time reruns of the HBO blockbuster, *Sex in the City*, and am reminded of the show's brilliant finale--when Big flies to Paris to take his girl home as Mrs. Big, yes, but am reminded more immediately of my best friend's cancer treatments...as this episode is one wherein Samantha has cancer and is experimenting with wigs. The writers, directors, and performers make Sam's having cancer manageable by integrating a strain of humor into the dialogue and actions. They also make it heart-renderingly lovely by having that FOX, Smith Jarrod (played by), shave his gorgeous hair to show empathy for and solidarity with his lover. But that's television.

Back to my best bud, who was diagnosed with invasive endometrial adenocarcinoma: while I do not wish to profit from her cancer treatments by writing about them too explicitly, and though I have been keeping a meticulously detailed diary of her cancer treatments and side-effects, I have been given leave to discuss with you cancer treatments in general--by telling you which cancer treatments she has undergone thus far.

Almost immediately after she was diagnosed, she had a full radical hysterectomy...on Valentine's Day. This was done because the cancer was spread through her uterus, and so surgeons could investigate where the cancer was traveling: it was spreading toward the lymph nodes under the lungs.

Next were a series of consultations with top oncologists. The options are as terrifying or as dreadful as having to meet a mandate to vote for a country leader and finding the only choices are Adolph Hitler or Pol Pot. Actually, worse: she would have to "elect" two/both of the two options. She would have ten weeks of radiation, five days a week for six weeks; and she would take two types of chemotherapy (Sysplatin and 5FU--first for four days, then weekly.

Before beginning the first of the post-surgery cancer treatments, my friend was advised to get glutamine (vitamins) and Compazine (an anti-nausea potion)...to combat the Amaphostine shot. Besides having the run-around by pharmacies, she had no trouble before or after the first round (over four days, during the Academy Awards week).

Next in the series of cancer treatments was another nursing consultation: the specialist informed her she would have internal radiation: a tampon as lethal to her as to the cancer that would be inserted and would require she lie on her back with her feet up for three hours afterward.

For the first days, my best friend was feeling fine. When we spoke by phone (as I am a long drive away and cannot be there every day), she was still clear, attentive, and laughing. After two weeks, she was sick. She had terrible bathroom problems and couldn't even stay on the phone to talk or listen--though this woman is a phone freak, using the phone 99% of the time...over using email.

Thus far, then, through her pre-, post-, and interim cancer treatments, all I can do is find hysterical sayings to send her or save to read to her over the phone when she feels better. And she will, for she is a stalwart survivor with one of the finest senses of humor around. And THAT, is purportedly the BEST of cancer treatments: laughing.