



Abolishing the Big "C"

By Wendy Marks
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Cancer is a bigger fear to people than heart disease or diabetes, either one are more likely than cancer to kill you. Today, most people survive different forms of cancer and then move on to enjoy an excellent quality of life. In my practice, I see people every week that are thriving and enjoying everything life has to offer post their cancer experience.

It is natural for someone's body to have growths and fight them off in the normal course of events. The process of creating these growths through changes in the cells normal growth pattern and then cells in our body destroying them through our immune system goes on for the course of our lifetime. It is a beautiful and healthy process. It works most of the time. It is only in rare cases when the body cannot defend itself due to stress, genetics or injury that there is need for action. In most cases, these incidences of "cancer" can be helped either through traditional or alternative methods with only a small break in the rhythm of life.

I just had my annual check-up with my Primary Care Physician and we discussed this very issue. My PCP was talking about the fact that many people were given PAP tests more often than needed thus risking infection. He said the new standard is every five years and the scan for breast cancer is now recommended to be done every other year. The radiation risk is greater than the risk of breast cancer with overexposure to radiation for individuals without a family history of cancer.

I am not saying that people should not be treated for aggressive cancers, or that we should take lumps and bumps that are not where they are supposed to be casually. I am saying what we need to change is the way we speak about cancer.

There is a woman that I work with who is 88 years old and has been living with metastatic ductal breast cancer for 44 years. She has been monitored on a regular basis but never had surgery. It either didn't grow or grew so slowly that there was no need to do anything but keep an eye on it. Sometimes, if we act too quickly we do more damage than good.

What I would call for is a new language. Language that did not create fear. We could start by calling everything, before we know exactly what it is, a cell mass. This does not imply anything about it, and then when we know, we can call it something else. A lot

of the fear stems from the scary names and I think some people may tend to take action based on fear.

I would like to see a gradation chart of different kinds of growths and tumors. It would have clear explanations and photographs of levels of abnormal "cell masses." Everyone would have access and it would explain everything from the small cystic growth to serious metastatic disease. We could then make decisions in a calm way and with good knowledge. I propose abolishing the word cancer. Instead we should create a usable vocabulary that minimizes fear, and maximizes Learning and understanding.

I'd love to hear what you think about this. Please send me an email if you have comments.

Wendy