

## The Survivors Experience

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## Goals and Objectives

- Describe procedures that the breast cancer patient experiences
- List common side effects of chemotherapy
- Explain emotional responses patients may have to diagnosis and treatment
- Demonstrate how emotional and physical responses affect patient behaviors
- Create a more compassionate understanding of patient needs
- Implement appropriate communication skills.



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## Sequence of Events 2017-18

- |                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Screening mammogram   | • Diagnosis                     |
| • Additional views      | • Treatment plan                |
| • US                    | • Second, third, fourth, fifth, |
| • US Guided Core Biopsy | sixth opinions                  |
| • Stereotactic Biopsy   | • Medication                    |



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## Sequence of Events

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| • Port placement                         | • Neutropenic fever/Chemo crash |
| • Chemo (Taxol) 12 rounds                | • Wireless localization         |
| • MRIs                                   | • Sentinal node procedure       |
| • More chemo (the Red Devil)<br>4 rounds | • Lumpectomy                    |
|  | • Rad Tx                        |



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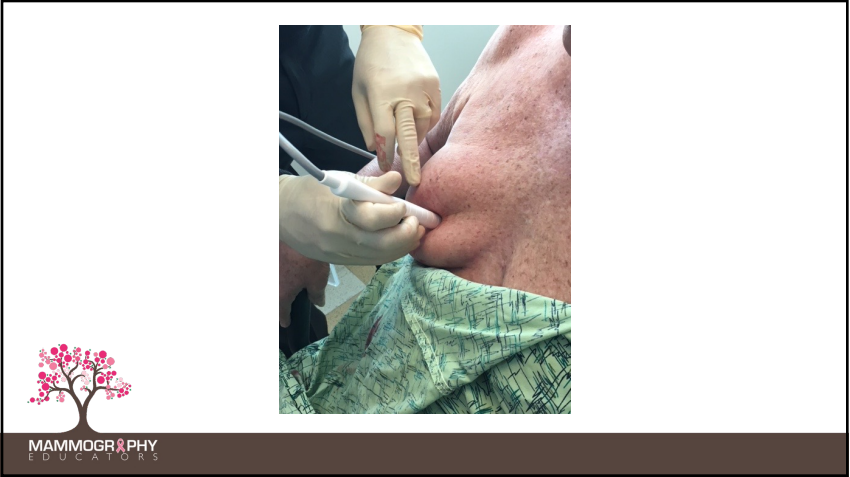
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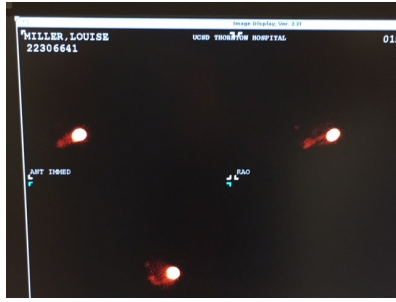
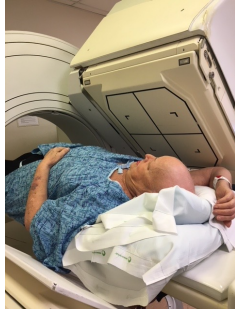
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## Typical Feelings

- Angry
- Scared
- Helpless
- It's not fair
- Why me?
- Guilty



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## Manifestation of Feelings

- Crabby
- Weepy
- Argumentative
- Non-communicative
- Rude
- Timid



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## Causes of Typical Feelings

- Fear of the effects of chemotherapy (baldness)
- Fear of losing our breast(s)
- Fear of dying
- Lack of knowledge
- Misinformation
- Appointments – so many, longggg waits



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## What People Usually Know

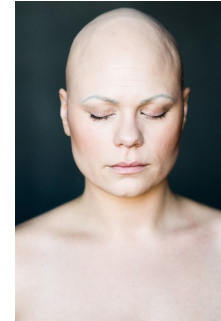
Physical side effects of chemotherapy:

- Nausea
- Hair loss



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## The Big Fear



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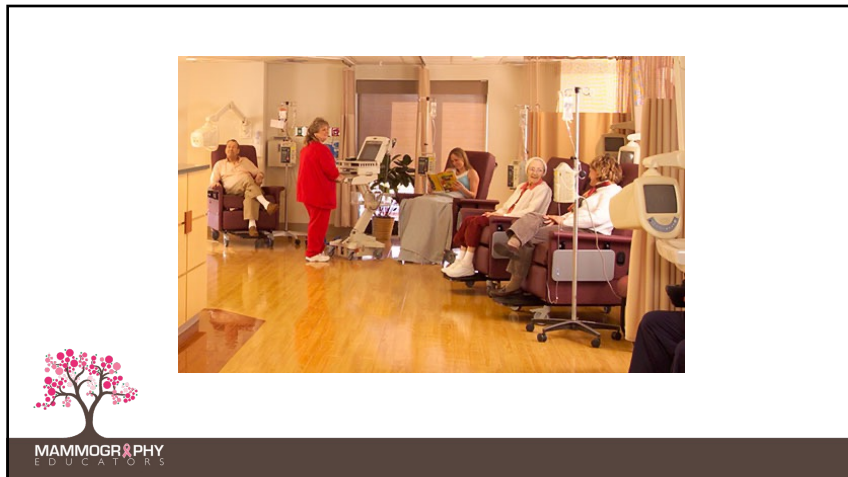
## What Most People Do Not Know

- **The “chemo” experience**
- Physical side effects of chemotherapy
- Emotional side effects of having cancer



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## What Most People Do Not Know

Physical side effects of chemotherapy:

- Anemia
- Appetite changes
- Bleeding problems
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Infection



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## Red Blood Cell Count

## & Cancer

What can you do about red blood cell count after chemo & radiation?

SteadyHealth.com



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## Neutropenic Fever



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## What Most People Don't Know

### Physical side effects of chemotherapy

- Mouth/Throat/Nose Sores and Changes
- Nerve Changes (neuropathy)
- Pain
- Sexual Changes
- Swelling
- Urinary Changes
- Memory Changes



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If I had a dollar for everytime I got distracted, I wish I had some ice cream.

someecards  
user card



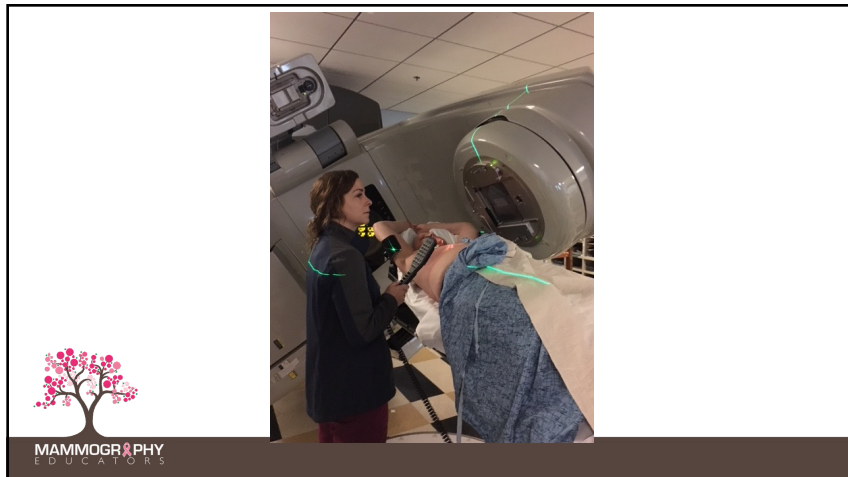
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## Radiation Therapy

- 3 weeks whole breast
- 1 week "boost"



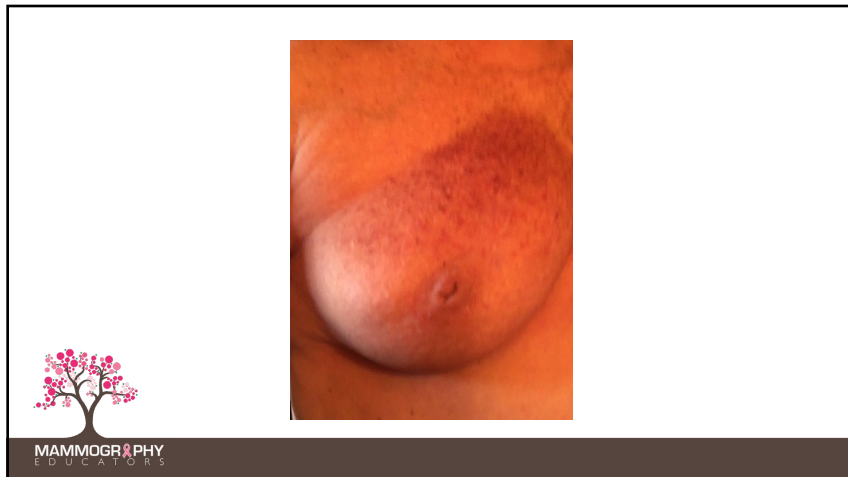
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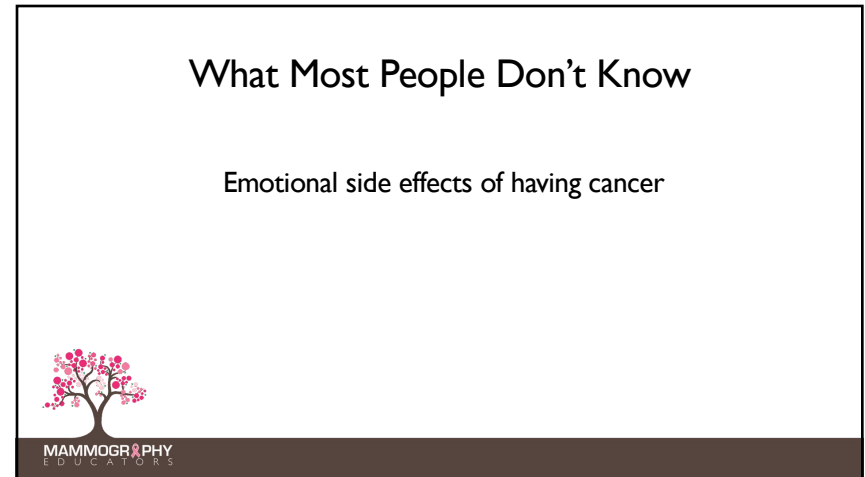
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## Common Emotions During/After Tx

- Concerns about chronic health problems
- What do I do next?
- Frustration with physical changes or new limitations
- Sense of grief or loss (over others being diagnosed )
- Discomfort or shame when asking for help so long after treatment
- Anger



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## Common Emotions During/After Tx

- Relief that it is finally over
- Cautious Optimism
- Fluctuations in emotions
- Concerns about chronic health problems



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## AND THE NUMBER ONE CONCERN: ***FEAR OF RECURRENCE***

- Can interfere with every aspect of life
- Can be triggered by reminders
- Can be masked by effects of treatment



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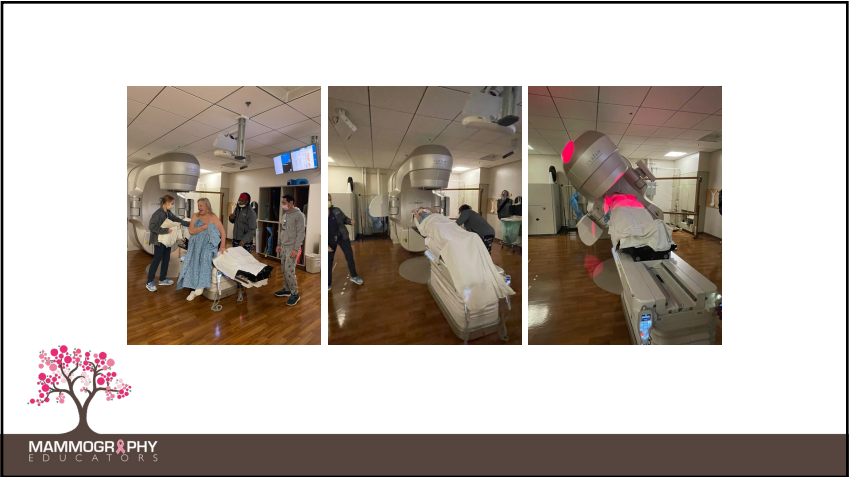
Stage 0 –DCIS  
Dx: August, 2023  
Finish Tx: January, 2024



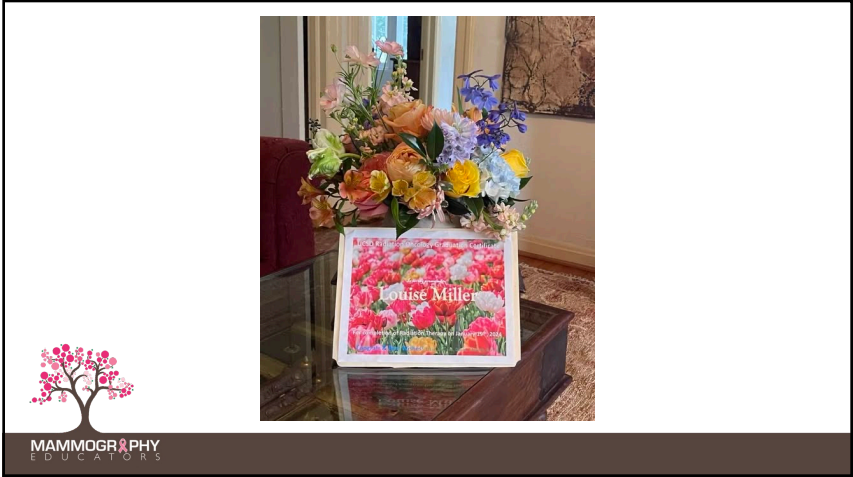
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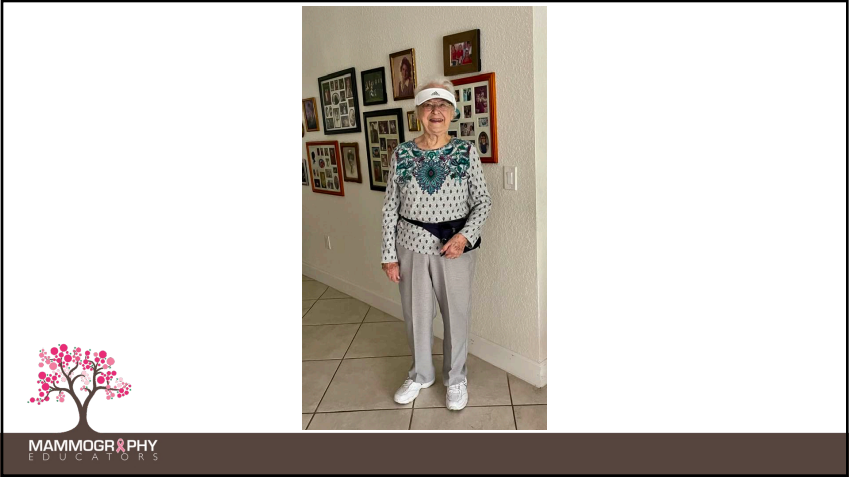
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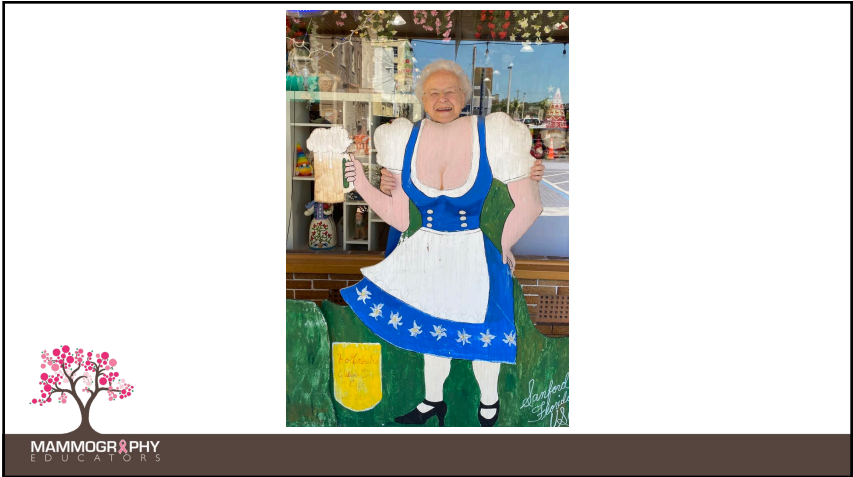
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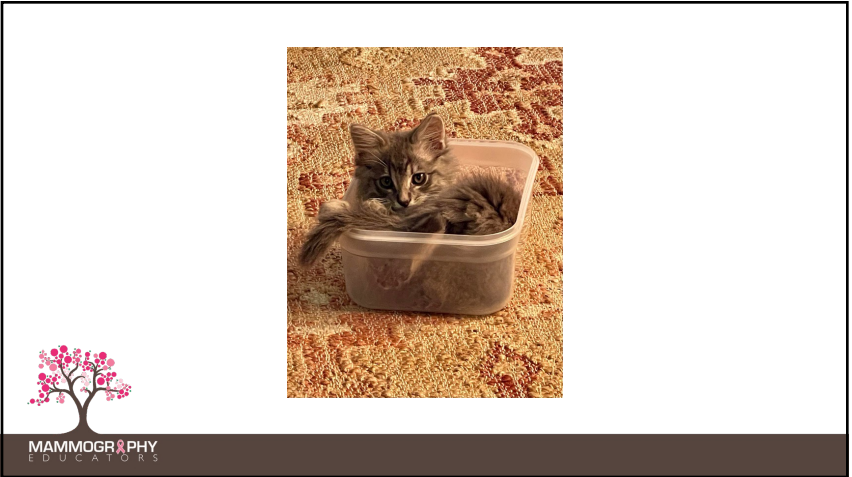
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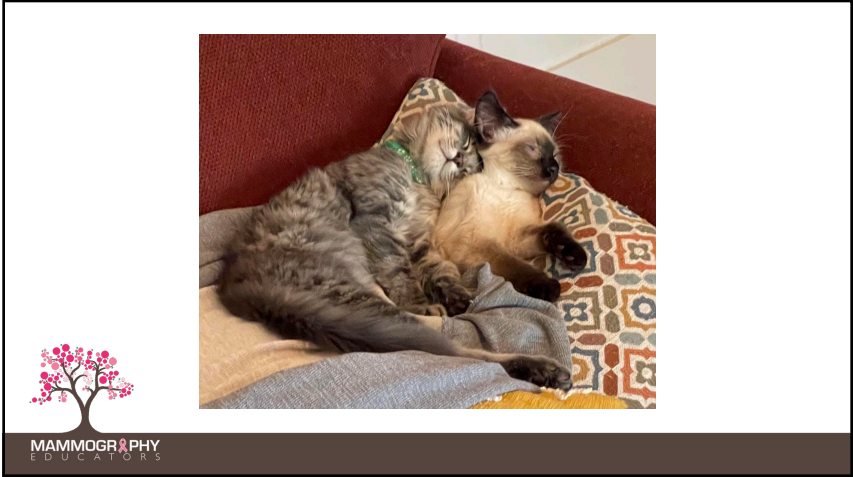
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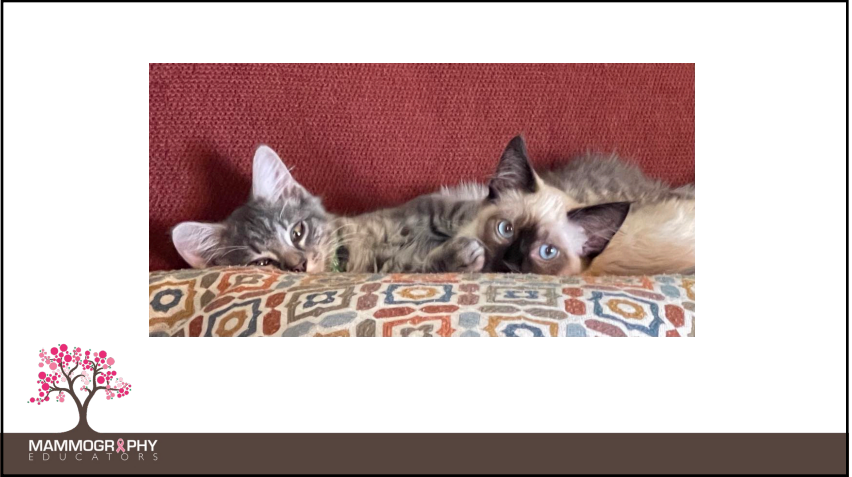
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## July 2024

- Fever 102+
- Night sweats
- Severe headaches
- Lost 20+ lbs in 4 weeks
- Extremely weak
- Balance issues
- Blood tests - toxoplasmosis
- Liver US
- Low dose antibiotics



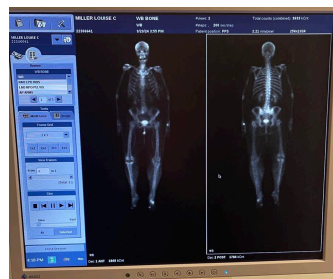
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## August/September 2024

- Saw oncologist
- CT
- MRI (brain and liver)
- Bone scan



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Menu UC San Diego Health

MRI LIVER W/O CONTRAST

CLINICAL HISTORY:  
Characterize lesion (not FNH). Breast cancer.

TECHNIQUE:  
SCANNER: 1.5 Tesla superconducting magnet  
COVERAGE: Abdomen  
IV CONTRAST: 10 mL of (gadobutrol (GADAVIST) injection SOLN 10 mL)  
SEQUENCES: Multiphase, multisequence MRI images were acquired prior to administration.

COMPARISON:  
CT abdomen/pelvis 9/16/2024.

FINDINGS:  
LUNG BASES: Unremarkable  
LIVER: Multiple hepatic metastatic lesions, for reference:  
\*2.1 x 1.2 cm segment 8 metastasis (series 904, image 78)  
\*1.4 cm segment 8 metastasis (series 904, image 79)  
\*1.6 cm segment 2/3 metastasis (series 904, image 62).

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← Test Results List

CT ABDOMEN AND PELVIS WITH CONTRAST

Results

Impression

IMPRESSION:  
At least 5 hypoenhancing lesions are seen in the right-greater-than-left hepatic lobes which are highly concerning for hepatic metastases. These are new since 2017 and might correlate with hepatic foci seen recent abdominal ultrasound from 8/8/2024. Again MRI liver with Eovist could better enumerate and assess size and spread of the lesions.

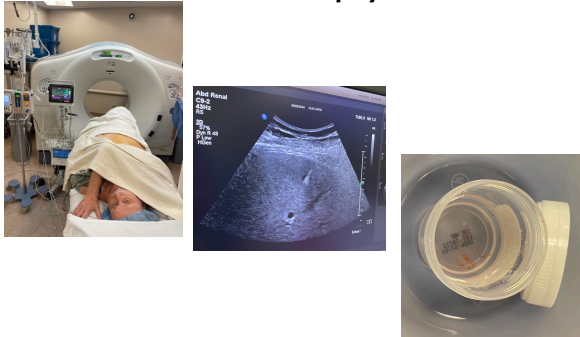
At least 2 splenic lesions which are new since prior study from 2017 are also concerning for metastases. can also be further evaluated with MRI if performed for hepatic metastases.

No other evidence of metastatic disease in the abdomen/pelvis.



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## Liver Biopsy



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## Liver Biopsy

NEGATIVE!!



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## Diagnoses from Blood Tests

- Coccidioidomycosis – Valley Fever
- Coxiella burnetii – Query Fever



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## Diagnoses from Blood Tests

- Coccidioidomycosis – Valley Fever
- Coxiella burnetii – Query Fever
- **Bartonella henselae**



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## January 2025 Erythema Nodosum



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## Cat Scratch Disease (Bartonella Henselae)



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## Remember: Recovery Takes Time

“When treatment ends, the “warrior” and his/her family often not prepared for the fact that recovery takes time. In general, your recovery will take much longer than your treatment did. People often say that they did not realize how much time they needed to recover.”

Facing Forward



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## Learning and Teaching Points

- Realization that the breast cancer survivor/patient may have different emotional and physical needs
- The effectiveness of good communication skills
- The importance of education



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## Importance of Communication – TIPS FOR TECHS

- Speak their language
- Do not offer opinions or share your personal cancer experience
- Addressing the patient
- Non-verbal communication – hugs?



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## “Say What?” Things You Should Never Say To A Cancer Patient\*

- What are your odds?
- You brought this on yourself.
- I know someone with your type of cancer, they \_\_\_\_\_.
- Good luck on your journey.
- Forget what your doctor says, you should try x,y,z.
- Nothing



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\*Hutch News: Oct. 30, 2013 By Diane Mapes

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## What You Can Do/Say As A Professional

- Speak from the heart: “I’m so sorry”
- Acknowledge the patient’s feelings
- Respect their decisions
- Use this new knowledge to create compassion



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## Importance of Education

- Learn all you can
- Ask questions
- Read, read, read
- Understand the *patient* experience
- Use the information to be compassionate towards those finding their way



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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!!



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## What You Can Do As A Friend

- Speak from the heart
- Help with specific tasks before they ask
- Remember, even cancer patients get cancered out.
- Be there
- Compassion



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“Cancer brings changes that are not always for the worse and they bring about healthy personal growth. The cancer experience and your emotional responses can become important resources as you face your future.”

LIVESTRONG@2004



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# COMPASSION



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# HOPE



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## This is personal!

Each and every patient belongs to someone.

Take the time to see them as such.



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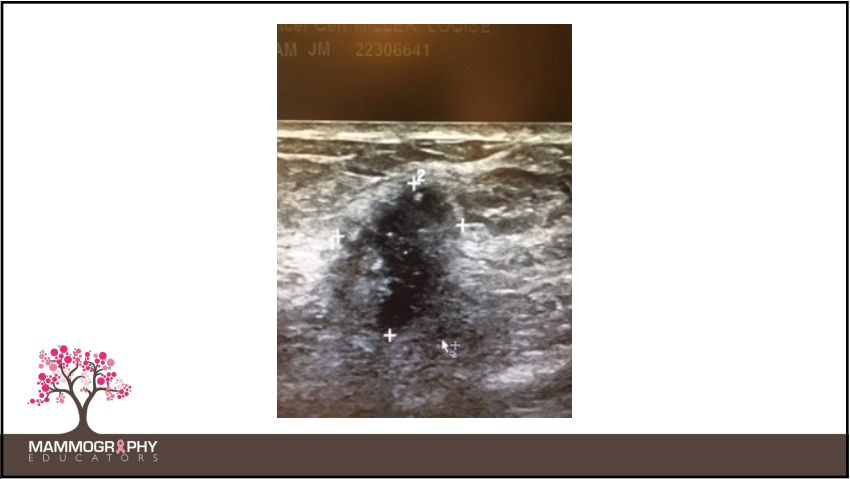


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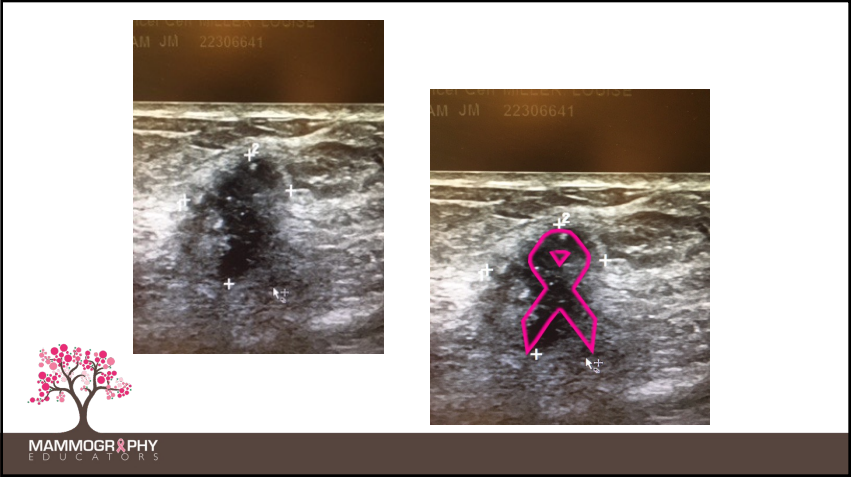
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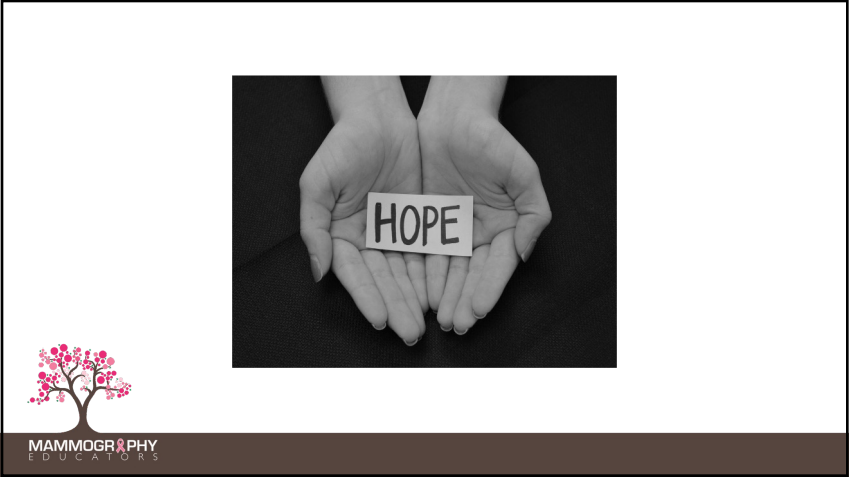
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# Thank you Emory!

Please record your attendance  
by scanning the QR code to sign-out.



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