

My Journey Part 2 – Bulletin No 5 (20 April 2020)

Hi folks I have had numerous enquiries since Bulletin 4 was sent regarding progress with my treatment. In order to combat the boredom of social isolation thought I might as well put pen to paper (maybe fingers to keyboard) and up date my journey.

My program of radiotherapy (25 sessions) was to commence on Monday 6 April, however I was advised on the Friday that this would be postponed until the following Wednesday to allow for further fine tuning to my program which in the finish allowed the program to commence on the Thursday 9 April. Back to the daily grind of travelling to the GCUH each day to receive my dose of the cancer killer. The delay allowed for the programmers maximise the effect of the radiotherapy thus minimising the risks involved with radiating my neck region for a second time in four years.

The GCUH is only 6kms from home and each day it takes 10 minutes to drive to the hospital and park in an area reserved for radiotherapy patients. I received no more than two minutes of radiotherapy during the ten minutes I am strapped to the linear accelerator which allows for the machine to index to the various locations to allow for the two areas of cancer to be effectively treated. I am home again within an hour of leaving and my sessions are programmed for 6.50am each day so that my hospital visits out of the way by 7.30am each day. Approximately 100 patients per day are undergoing radiotherapy at the GCUH.

The ICON Cancer Centre at the GCUH is a private medical provider and I cannot speak highly enough of the staff, including the oncologists, nursing staff and the linear accelerator operators everyone is very friendly and obliging making visits there a pleasure. To operate the machinery the staff need a Bachelor of Radiation which is a four year university course. There are also physicists working with the radiation oncologists who are responsible for producing the radiation program and the nursing staff provide the specialist needs of patients who undergo radiotherapy. Thanks folks you are a great team.

Visits to the GCUH have changed since the outbreak of corona virus, the extensive hospital volunteers program has been abandoned and there are stations within the hospital to establish the bonafides of each person entering the hospital. Social distancing is strictly enforced and there are dozens of hand sanitising stations throughout the hospital. My weekly visit to the dietitian and the speech pathologist had been done by the phone although teleconferencing will commence this week to check what I really look like, which really has not changed as I have only lost 2kgs since the commencement of my chemotherapy in January.

To date I have had 13 sessions of radiotherapy and there has been no changes with regard to my saliva, taste, swallowing and skin, a good sign that this time around the program will not have any harmful side effects.

The first time I had the program I become a social recluse as a result of the combination of 35 sessions of radiotherapy and 7 sessions of chemotherapy which resulted in sleeping for about 14 hours a days and having to be fed via a stomach tube. This time I am joining the rest of the population and confining myself to barracks which makes me happier as I know that everyone else is doing the same. If you can't beat them join them.

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life

Neil Raward

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