

140 Island Way #131
Clearwater Beach, FL 33767

Women's First

Attention: Dr. Mollie Cartwright

3900 Kresge Way
Louisville, KY 40207

May 29, 2019

Dr. Cartwright,

I want to pass the message on self-breast exams that saved me and a few other women I know. Someone might appreciate the reminder and pass it on to the women they love.

Today was radiation #3 of 21.

Last December ('18), I had my annual High Definition mammogram. It came back clean. In March ('19), I felt a small pea-sized lump on the side of my left breast. I immediately called my OBGYN of 25 years, and set up an appointment for the day my trip ended (in Louisville). It was confirmed to be cancer after being biopsied and MRI'd. A lumpectomy was performed. Two lymph nodes were also removed. All the cancer was gone. A second surgery was performed to check the margins and they also came back cancer-free. My surgeon thanked me for making his job easy. It's not always the case.

I'm now receiving preventive radiation, 21 sessions that last :10, Monday to Friday. I was lucky to not need chemo.

The Lesson? **DON'T RELY ON YOUR YEARLY MAMMOGRAM, CHECK YOURSELF DAILY, KNOW WHAT "NORMAL" FEELS LIKE AND IF SOMETHING DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT, RUN TO YOUR DOCTOR. (MEN TOO).**

The bonus? My friend who didn't use to check, since I urged her to, also found one and it was also cancer. She had a double mastectomy 3 weeks ago.

More than 99% of the women I tell my story to DON'T check. WHY NOT?? Most women rely on once-a-year mammogram and one lady hadn't had one in 13 years. If I hadn't found my lump and waited for the yearly mammogram, it would have been too late for me. HD is same price as regular, so no reason not to opt in for it, but remember, it won't catch the pea-sized lump I found by hand.

The timing is never right for something like this, however, in my case, it could have been much worse. I had just finished my last trip and was to be starting class. Instead, I had two surgeries. I will be starting class whenever I'm released by my doctors. I was very glad I hadn't started yet or I would have been tempted to ignore the problem.

As a result of this happening to me, I have a lot of empathy for those who hear the words "*You have cancer*" for the first time. It's a horrible feeling.

SEIZE THE DAY! CARPE DIEM!

Brigitte Lakah