# D:\Documents\My Pictures\breastribbon_jai.gif

## GESGAPEGIAG NEWSLETTER

## BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

## SEPTEMBER, 2009

## Dear Community Members;

It has been a while since I last sent out a newsletter on breast cancer. I think the last issue was in November, 2007. Wow, time sure has gone fast since then. I am pleased to inform you that I am continuing my quest to bring awareness to community members who are willing to read up on my material as well as my personal experience with breast cancer.

**This next chapter is on Surgical Treatment Decisions.**

# “I was frightened by how fast things were happening. I felt totally ignorant about breast cancer and had no idea where to turn for information or education.”

# “I had a limited amount of time to make my surgical decisions. I made my decisions after talking with my healthcare worker and based my decision on what I felt was the best choice for me. I couldn’t look back of have regrets.”

When your acute emotional stress is diminished, you may have many concerns about your diagnosis that need to be clarified. Many women say they were not prepared to hear the diagnosis and that everything the doctor said after the word “cancer” was hazy in their minds. *The word hazy is putting it mildly. All I remember is that I was scared, confused and so so lost. It was like I was in another world but the reality was that I had to take certain decisions that were very new to me. Decisions that decided my faith in this world and today when I do reflect on it, I am happy that I had someone help me with that. I Thank God that he sent me Pierre Paul Deslauriers to help me make the most important decision I had to make with regards to my life and my treatment. All my love to you and your family.*

You may want to list your questions and call the doctor’s office to schedule an appointment to receive accurate answers to your questions. Make this list with the person who accompanied you to the initial appointment. Before your visit, it will be helpful to begin reading and acquiring a basic understanding of the medical terms used and some of the treatment options that may be offered.

# The above is a not always possible due to the fact that informing yourself about your disease is so scary that you choose to neglect all the info that is out there and that’s ok. You may want to find someone who has been through it; I think that could be a better option for you if you’re scared. I know I choose not to read up on any information because I was so scared of the outcome or the possible outcome, it wasn’t until afterwards that I started educating myself with the disease and found it to be very knowledgeable and very helpful afterwards. When things occur now to my body, I always refer back to my book and look for their meaning and it has helped me a lot to sort out what needs to be done next. I can now choose my own destiny. It took me a long while, but I am very grateful that I started reading about my disease. At the beginning, it is so amazing because as your reading along, you are reading about yourself and your condition and somehow it makes it easier to deal with.

Today, women have the opportunity to participate and decide, with their physicians, which type of treatment will meet their personal needs and give the best chance for disease-free survival. It is important for you to understand why you are, or are not, offered certain treatment options. As an informed patient, you can become an active partner with your physician, understanding the treatments being discussed. It is also helpful if you can select once support person to accompany you to your appointments and participate in this process. This person will be a shoulder you can lean on and can help you remember and evaluate the information that is presented.

Obtaining accurate information about your particular disease is very important. Ask your physician for recommended reading material. Women’s magazines contain much information that is interesting, but it may not apply to the type of cancer you have and may confuse you. Medical terms sometimes have unusual meanings. Using a glossary to clarify the definitions of words will be helpful. As you read and learn, a sense of understanding will replace much of your fear about breast cancer. *This is so true; I would recommend that you use books that are available through your physician or a cancer clinic because each cancer is unique.*

Treatments for breast cancer are local (breast only) treatments and systemic (pertaining to the entire body) treatments. Local treatments include surgery and radiation therapy. Systemic treatments are chemotherapy and hormonal therapy: these treatments travel to all parts of the body.

During your evaluation for breast cancer treatment you may have a variety of physicians involved in evaluation of your cancer. Each has a special expertise in treating breast cancer.

* **Radiologist---** physician who uses diagnostic techniques such as mammography, ultrasound and minimally invasive biopsy to diagnose cancer.
* **Pathologist---**physician who analyzes cells or the characteristics of the tumor removed from your body to determine if disease is present.
* **Surgeon--**-physician who removed identified area of suspicion from the body by using surgery.
* **Reconstructive (Plastic) Surgeon---**physician who reconstructs altered or removed breast using body tissues or implants.
* **Medical Oncologist---**physician who specializes in internal medicine and in the treatment of cancer using a variety of methods including chemotherapy, immunotherapy and hormonal therapy. Your surgeon may have an oncologist evaluate you for cancer treatment before or after your surgery. It is very important that you have a good relationship with your oncologist if you are to receive other treatments in addition to your surgery. There will be a need for a great deal of interaction between you and the oncologist during the time you are receiving treatments. You should feel comfortable asking questions and participating in treatment decisions with your oncologist.
* **Radiation Oncologist---**physician who specializes in using radiation (x-ray) therapy to treat local areas of disease. If your physician feels that radiation therapy could kill any remaining cancer cells in an area of your body, you will be referred to a radiation oncologist. Most breast conserving surgeries are radiation therapy; it is helpful to have a consultation with the radiation oncologist before your surgery.
* **Next chapter is on determining factors for Surgery.**

# Should anyone need my help or assistance in dealing with this dreadful disease, please feel free to call me at 759 – 8009. I would feel very privileged and honored to help you out as much as I can.