



Finding My VOICE

*“At that first doctor’s appointment, I froze up...
I couldn’t come up with the questions to ask.”*

—Joan Lunden, journalist, author, and television host

CANCER IS PERSONAL. Why? Well, one of the first things I learned when I was diagnosed is that every single person’s cancer is actually different. What that means is every patient will require a treatment plan that is unique to them.

So from that first appointment when you are newly diagnosed, it’s imperative that you become an active participant in the discussions to ensure your best outcome. You go from one doctor to another, from the radiologist to a surgeon and then on to an oncologist; each doctor is responsible for a different aspect of your cancer care. It is an amazing intake of information.

It is recommended to always have someone with you, especially in those early important decision-making appointments with doctors; someone who can take notes and even ask questions when perhaps you feel so vulnerable that you have lost your ability to speak up. As a journalist, it is my nature to be curious and ask questions, but I remember feeling like I was in shock at those early appointments. I couldn’t come up with the questions to ask; in fact, I could barely focus on what the doctor was saying.

It’s not uncommon to freeze up at a doctor’s appointment. You have only a few minutes, and you often walk out of the office and instantly remember the one question you didn’t ask! I found that keeping a dedicated journal with all of my doctor’s notes and even all the questions that popped into my head between

appointments was a great way to make sure I didn’t forget anything. It helped me feel like I had a sense of control.

Many people in my generation grew up with the mindset that you never questioned a doctor, *ever*. And yet, with a critical diagnosis like cancer, asking questions and getting a second opinion is not only acceptable, it is encouraged. I’ll be the first to admit, I was reluctant to get a second opinion, almost feeling like it would be rude or disrespectful. However, my 31-year-old daughter insisted that we follow through with a secondary opinion so that we would be able to make an informed decision about the best course of treatment to take.

“If you or a loved one is going through cancer treatment, arm yourself with knowledge, ask a million questions, and don’t be afraid to get a second opinion.”

As a patient, feeling comfortable speaking with your doctors is a critical aspect to the success of your treatment and survivorship. Don’t worry if you find it hard to make that first step. I will tell you that once I found my voice and took an active role in my cancer care, I began to feel empowered, and it went a long way toward helping me maintain a strong fighting attitude.

So if you or a loved one is going through cancer treatment, arm yourself with knowledge, ask a million questions, and don’t be afraid to get a second opinion. Finding your voice and becoming an active participant in your cancer treatment can empower you and make cancer a little less scary.

at HOME
with JOAN

A website dedicated to stories of empowerment within the patient community.



MEET SAFIYA

“When I got the news, my first concern was, How am I going to tell my kids?”



MEET NATALIE

“When we’re diagnosed with cancer, we lose that sense of normalcy.”



MEET SHAIKA

“What helps me is feeling good, and my feeling good is looking good.”



MEET JANINE

“Being a survivor is a part of me, as much as being a mom and a police officer is.”

To hear more from Joan and these patients, visit AtHomeWithJoan.com.

Questions TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- What type of chemotherapy am I receiving?
- Am I at risk for infection?
- What could happen if I get a serious infection?
- Should Neulasta® Onpro® be part of my treatment plan?

Indication

Neulasta® is a prescription medicine used to help reduce the chance of infection due to a low white blood cell count, in people with certain types of cancer (non-myeloid), who receive anti-cancer medicines (chemotherapy) that can cause fever and low blood cell count.

Important Safety Information

Do not take Neulasta® if you have had a serious allergic reaction to Neulasta® (pegfilgrastim) or NEUPOGEN® (filgrastim).

Tell your healthcare provider if you have: sickle cell disease; severe skin reactions to acrylic adhesives; are allergic to latex; have problems with your kidneys; have any other medical problems; are planning to become pregnant, or to breastfeed; and about all the medicines you take (prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements).

Possible serious side effects of Neulasta® may include: spleen rupture (which can cause death); a serious lung problem called acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS); serious allergic reactions; sickle cell crises (which can cause death); kidney injury (glomerulonephritis), increased white blood cell count (leukocytosis), or capillary leak syndrome.

Call your doctor or seek emergency care right away

if you have: pain in the left upper stomach area or left shoulder tip area (symptoms of an enlarged or ruptured spleen); fever; shortness of breath, trouble breathing, or a fast rate of breathing (symptoms of ARDS); shortness of breath, wheezing, dizziness, swelling around the mouth or eyes, fast pulse, sweating, or hives (symptoms of an allergic reaction), puffiness in your face or ankles, blood in your urine or brown-colored urine or you notice you urinate less than usual (symptoms of kidney injury), or swelling or puffiness and are urinating less often, trouble breathing, swelling of your stomach area (abdomen) and feeling of fullness, dizziness or feeling faint, or a general feeling of tiredness (symptoms of capillary leak syndrome). The most common side effect of Neulasta® is pain in the bones and in your arms and legs. These are not all the possible side effects of Neulasta®. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088 (1-800-332-1088).

Please see brief summary of Important Product Information on the previous page.