

Rural hope: Fighting cancer in a small town

Access to care for patients living far from treatment centers or medical centers can be challenging for rural patients. Anal cancer survivor Terry shares.

CHESTER, NJ, UNITED STATES,
September 27, 2022 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- When Cancer Hope Network was founded in 1981, there was one support group for cancer patients in the state of New Jersey. Today, a wide array of supportive services are available to

patients across the nation. As knowledge of cancer increases and long-overdue research on the impact of social determinants of health (the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes 1) and health disparities (differences in health and health care between groups that stem from broader inequities²) are highlighting areas of need and directing efforts and rallying coalitions the disparities faced by various communities.

“

Home is always where a person wants to be when we aren't feeling well but sometimes you must get creative to get through unexpected things to make it a little easier on yourself.”

Anal cancer survivor Terry

Cancer in Rural Communities

Country living has many benefits. from fresh air to a summertime full of ripe tomatoes and fresh corn, or easy access to extraordinary lakes and rivers. But when cancer arrives, small-town life can have challenges too.

“Rural populations experience cancer disparities across the cancer control continuum from prevention and incidence, to survivorship and mortality.”³ After diagnosis “Patients in rural areas face limited access to medical and oncology

providers, long travel times, and low recruitment to clinical trials, all of which affect quality of care and health outcomes.”⁴

Fighting Cancer in a Small Town

Anal cancer survivor and CHN volunteer mentor Terry shares the challenges she faced while receiving treatment far from home. .

Terry lives in Lilliwaup, a small unincorporated community on the west shore of Hood Canal in Washington. “The population on a good day is 469. A beautiful location with access to the ocean,



Olympic National Forest, and its many hiking trails. Lilliwaup is beautiful, but it is remote."

Terry's story

"In April 2019, I was diagnosed with Stage 2 Anal Cancer. I was blessed to have a primary care doctor in West Olympia, WA who called me immediately after learning of the diagnosis from my colo/rectal doctor. He asked if it would be ok to refer me to the oncologist that had treated his wife's cancer 5 years prior, as well as refer me to his neighbor and colleague who is a radiation oncologist. Both were in Olympia, WA which is located about an hour from my home."

"I felt reassured by my primary care doctor that he "had this." Within days, I had appointments, a PET scan and was scheduled for the 6-week protocol of chemo/radiation that treats anal cancer. The first week and the fifth week I had both chemo and radiation on the same days. As the radiation oncologist put it, "this is like pouring gasoline on a fire" but it is an effective protocol and I learned I had an 80% chance of success. With that said, driving an hour each way every day for the 6-week treatment became an issue on day 3. Between the nausea and the potential for diarrhea, the hour-long winding road seemed long. The stress of having an accident in the car (vomiting or diarrhea) going to the appointment or coming back home from the appointment was very high. The windy road added to my nausea. I was basically just holding on, quiet and white knuckling it with each trip. Waiting in between the same day appointments was also difficult, just sitting in the car feeling terrible and hoping I didn't need a bathroom."

"After three weeks of enduring the driving back and forth, my husband made the decision to book a hotel room across the street from the radiation office and a short drive to the chemo center. This was the right decision at the time. As I endured the chemo and radiation the nausea, diarrhea and blistering in my private areas began making it difficult to walk, eat, or do much at all so having the hotel right there lessened my stress in a big way. This particular hotel because of its location to the radiation center offered cancer patients low rates and the staff were welcoming, considerate and offered encouragement each day and time I slowly walked through the lobby."

Terry is now three years cancer free. "Home is always where a person wants to be when we aren't feeling well but sometimes you must get creative to get through unexpected things to make it a little easier on yourself. A good medical team, an excellent support system of family and friends, and the ability to deal with the side effects as they come up are huge in getting through cancer. While cancer certainly is a "big thing," I found it is a lot of the little things that help you get through it a day at a time, and sometimes it's a minute at a time."

Finding help when fighting cancer in a rural setting

Cancer can be isolating – whether that isolation is brought on by [friends who stay away because don't know what to say](#) or because clam beds and state parks are closer than the oncologist. Connecting with a volunteer mentor can help ease that isolation. Our Support Volunteers won't recommend specific treatments or push city-based cancer centers, but they can help develop questions to ask your care team – wherever they are.

Being matched can provide [a free and confidential connection](#) with “someone who doesn’t know your family and friends, who never run into you or your husband at the store.”

To [get matched with a cancer survivor or cancer caregiver mentor](#) who understands, call 877-HOPENET or visit cancerhopenetwork.org.

Sarah Cassidy

Cancer Hope Network

+1 908-879-4039

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/593042311>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.