

Cervical Cancer Case Study

Name: Delfina

Diagnosed with: Stage 1 Cervical Cancer

My Story

In the summer of 2005, Delfina was a 37 year-old happily married mother of two. Her family had recently purchased a new home and between that, work and her daughters' soccer games, she was leading a busy life.

In September, she went for her annual gynecological exam, just as she had routinely done her entire adult life. But this visit was different. Immediately her doctor noticed something out of the ordinary. Her cervix appeared red and irritated, with some discharge. Her doctor conducted a Pap smear, but did not wait for the results to set up a follow-up appointment. She suspected Delfina might have cervical cancer and scheduled a colposcopy and LEEP procedure to be conducted during her next visit to remove any abnormal cells.

A week and a half later, Delfina had the colposcopy and LEEP procedure. Afterwards, her doctor explained to her that she did not think she was able to remove all of the abnormal cells. The lab tests would have to confirm her suspicion, but it looked like Delfina was going to have to have a hysterectomy.

By the time Delfina returned home she already had a message from her doctor saying she received the lab results and wanted to see Delfina at 8 a.m. the next morning. Anxious and worried, Delfina showed up for her appointment. The doctor explained to her that the cells were in fact cancerous and she appeared to have Stage 2 cervical cancer, though they couldn't be sure until after surgery. Even though it meant she could no longer have children, Delfina needed a hysterectomy as soon as possible. The cancer was at risk of spreading and her life was in danger.

Before the surgery Delfina dealt with the extremely difficult task of breaking the news to her family and took all the necessary steps to get her affairs in order, including writing up a living will. Fortunately, the surgeon conducting the procedure assured her that she would be fine and said she was very lucky she caught the cancer when she did.

On Halloween morning Delfina underwent a radical hysterectomy. Her uterus, cervix, top part of the vagina, ovaries, fallopian tubes, lymph nodes and lymph channels were all removed. A few days later, her surgeon came back with the pathology report to inform her that she did not have Stage 2 cancer, but rather Stage 1, and as a result would not have to undergo additional treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation.

Her follow-up visits every four months since the surgery have all been positive and with every year that goes by her prognosis will be better. Delfina looks forward to the day where she will be considered in complete remission, after which her chances of relapse decrease significantly.

“I'm just glad to be alive every day.”

Looking back, Delfina is confident that she handled her disease appropriately. Her doctor agrees. She told Delfina that she did the right thing by complying with her annual visits and if she hadn't she probably would not have caught the cancer in time because of the rapid pace in which it was spreading. Delfina knows that having her annual exam saved her life. She is adamant that every woman should have a yearly Pap and hopefully avoid the difficult experience she had to endure.