

To whom it may concern,

This is a submission about my personal experiences with Cancer.

Roughly thirteen years ago, a dear friend of mine was in her early thirties and was diagnosed with stage four Breast Cancer. Due to her youthful age she was admitted into a clinical trial which enabled her to gain access to a much less toxic chemotherapy drug that otherwise would have been far out of her reach due to its tremendous expense. She knew of other patients who were unable to get into such a trail re-mortgaging their houses to pay for the drug. While many others who were placed on the standard treatment at the time, have since passed away. She on the other hand, remains in remission.

During her treatment she gave me a fundraising wrist-band that was pale pink and simply said "know more". (I believe it was from an American Breast Cancer organisation). I wore the band for years. I thought it was such an understated but powerful message. So now when I consider all the progress in survival rates that have happened in those thirteen years, I feel that in the case of Breast Cancer the message has been largely achieved.

The statistic that has often gets thrown around is that 1 in 4 people will get cancer in their lifetime. Watching my beloved ultra-fit "organic vegan" friend get diagnosed with stage four Cancer, it occurred to me that diagnosis in most instances has far more to do with chance than cause. So much so, that when I received my own diagnosis I was not nearly as shocked as I possibly could have been.

I was 32 years old and I had been married to the most incredible man I have ever encountered for roughly 8 years. We were in the final stages of our adoption application. We had chosen adoption on the basis that there are so many children in need of loving families that we would rather dedicate our efforts to providing one (or hopefully more) of them with a home than creating further people on an already overpopulated planet. But as soon as I was diagnosed, this possibility entirely disappeared.

After returning from a trip to Melbourne to visit my sister, I went to bed and my husband heard a noise that he assumed was our two cats brawling. He walked into our bedroom and found me convulsing mid-seizure. In that moment he believed I was about to die and he still gets emotional talking about it.

It turned out, that my seizure had been caused by a brain tumour. First thought to be benign, it was eventually ruled to be an astrocytoma that sits between 2 and 3 on the grading scale. It was located in my front left temporal lobe and was surgically removed in its entirety. I also contracted two infections during the initial surgery and

recovery and had a second surgery to clean out the site. This was followed by an 8-week course of intravenous antibiotics.

I was incredibly fortunate that I was supported by an amazing team of Neurosurgeons, Oncologists and Nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital that fought to get me into a closing clinical trial. My luck continued further when I was randomly allocated the most aggressive arm of the trial. It allowed me to access drugs that would have been otherwise out of my financial reach. Unfortunately due to a late-presenting allergic reaction I was unable to complete all of the Temozolomide scheduled for my arm of the trial. However, I still received far more treatment than the standard rebate-supported recommendations.

Prior to my diagnosis I had absolutely no idea just how low the survival rates for Brain Cancer are and how little progress has been achieved in the last thirty years. The fact that money for research is now my only hope for the future both saddens and infuriates me.

But far more than merely being concerned about my own future what really upsets me is the fact that this disease kills more children in this country than any other. It kills more people under 40 years old than any other type of Cancer. It's taking people who have barely started life. It's taking people in the prime of their lives, often with young children relying on them. It is often taking them painfully as they gradually lose their cognitive abilities alongside their bodily functions. It's taking an inconceivably horrendous toll on their young families and those left in its wake. It is a truly devastating disease and yet it receives so little proportional funding for research.

My hope is that this submission will echo and reinforce the message that all of the others are aiming to convey. I appreciate that in the current financial climate requesting further funding is immensely problematic. And I appreciate that there are certainly many worthy causes. But the overwhelming statistics on this disease shouldn't be solely left up to the general public to improve.

Thanking you

Laura Kennedy