

Committee Secretary
Select Committee into Funding for Research into Cancers with Low Survival Rates
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

I am writing to express my concern around the lack of funding available for Brain Cancer Research. My father's recent diagnosis and subsequent passing has eluded me to its inadequacy. Funding and research to other forms of the disease have proven exceptionally advantageous and I wish the same for Brain Cancer.

My Dad was self-employed most of his life, he worked hard and employed many people in his time, often people who may have found it difficult to find work elsewhere. He was a kind hearted, caring man who wanted to see others do well. He was an innovator and made employment positions where there were previously none. He deserved a long and relaxing retirement!

It was early December when I attended a Dr's appointment with my Dad after he had a brain scan. We thought that Dad had had a mild stroke and were all set to find out how to go about rehabbing the effects of this. As we sat there together as a family and Dad's Doctor's eyes filled with tears and he struggled to speak, we realised it was worse than we thought.

My Dad was told that he had brain cancer. Yes, naturally we were very upset and the shock of hearing those words were like an unexpected punch in the stomach, it took our breath away. My mind immediately turned to how we would beat it and the fact that there is some really good research into cancer these days and that cancer didn't mean a death sentence.

I had confused brain cancer with the many other cancers that had received abundant funding and research! I obviously started doing some research into brain cancer and found out that it had very little funding even when its mortality rate and effect on children was so high!

Dr Charlie Teo stated in his interview on Sunrise that 'when he first started medical school Leukaemia had a 90% mortality rate but now due to funding and research there is a 90% survival rate'.

I wrote this to try to explain what my Dad and our family was going through when he was admitted to Hospital.

Like many Dads, my Dad is my hero, all my life I have looked up to him and admired his achievements, he was my superman!

Before Christmas 2016 he was diagnosed with brain cancer. A rapid form of the cancer that is robbing him of his dignity and his ability to communicate. I have to sit and watch the nurses ask him time and time again what his birthday is, what day of the week or what year it is and watch him stare back at them and do his best to give an answer! It frustrates the daylight out of him because he knows he's getting it wrong but can't find the correct answer. It's getting worse day by day.

I tell him I love him but I'm not sure if he really understands anymore, nor does he fully understand what's going on with him. The monitor by his bedside bleeps to let us know that his heart is beating way too fast as one of the tumours is in the area of his brain that controls motor function. He asks me if I can "fix that bloody clock", I try my best to explain to him that it's a monitor and it's watching his heart rate for us. He nods as though he understands but I know full well from the blank look on his face that he doesn't, he'll ask me again in an hour or so.

I'm slowly losing my hero; the bloke that knew everything, he was a highly intelligent man that taught me how to kick a footy, do maths, play hockey, change a spark plug and talk to girls! I'm losing him, mind first, his beautiful mind is disappearing and there's not a bloody thing I can do about it! But, I can try and stop it effecting your family and future generations.

It doesn't matter how much money, love, determination or passion I have at this very moment, it won't help my dad, but by raising money towards brain cancer research, it might help yours; or your brother or sister, or your children.

According to Charlie Teo (Australian Neurosurgeon), more kids die from brain cancer than any other disease. Charlie went on to say that research into Leukaemia changed its rates from a 90% chance of dying when he started medical school to a 90% chance of survival today. The only thing that changed this was getting funding to do the research. I will try to change the odds for brain cancer in the future.

This funding and research may not come quick enough to save my Dads life but it could save yours, your Dads, your kids or your partners. It won't have an immediate impact but it will provide hope, hope that one day this disgusting disease is beaten and you don't have to watch your Dad lose his dignity and his ability to understand and communicate that you love him and he loves you.

I also lost a best mate to brain cancer when he was in his early 30's and my Dad is just 70, so age is no barrier. Individually I can't make a difference and neither can you, but together and dollar by dollar we can.

Every cent raised will go towards brain cancer research and fighting this disease.

This was my seemingly vain attempt to make a change, I just wanted my Dad back!

My Dad was diagnosed with a Glioblastoma Multiform Grade 4, my understanding is that he had a less than 10% chance of survival, the same as a Leukaemia diagnosis when Charlie Teo was going through medical school! I will never be able to bring my Dad back but I hope that

in the future there's a family somewhere that doesn't have to watch their Dad, husband, grandfather or friend die from this disgusting disease.

For the last 3 weeks Dad was unable to speak and gradually lost the use of his hands and arms, we kept talking to him and telling him we loved him right to the very end. We could tell from his eyes that he was trying to talk to us and ask for things he wanted but most of the time we couldn't work out what he wanted. The feeling that Dad was having very normal thoughts but was trapped inside a body that could no longer move nor communicate was emotionally excruciating!

I lost my Dad at 70 years old, on the 3rd of March 2017 at 6.07pm, 3 months after his diagnosis, whilst my family and I sat at his bedside.

This is my plea to ask for more funding towards Brain Cancer Research and support the research being done by the 'Cure Brain Cancer Foundation'. Please make a difference in the future.

Sincerely

Brett Withington