

Deborah King

“October, breast cancer awareness month, is wonderful....unless you’ve just been diagnosed with breast cancer, in which case, every pink ribbon makes you want to hurl.

A year ago, I felt the lump. I had discharge. I had a mammogram in my old hometown and the radiologist said it was “nothing...just fatty tissue, no need for a biopsy.”

So, when I moved to Greensboro and finally got around to my first “new patient appointment”, my new primary care doctor felt the lump. I told her I had been told it was nothing. She didn’t think it was nothing. She sent me for a diagnostic mammogram immediately.

The mammogram and the ductogram came back abnormal, and the radiologist immediately scheduled the biopsy for the next business day. I knew from the look on his face the biopsy was not going to be good news. The day after the biopsy, I got my result’ “ductal carcinoma in situ with focus suspicious of early invasion”...aka- breast cancer.

“Good News! We caught it early!” –Really? Good News? I’ve just been told I have breast cancer and you’re telling me it’s good news?”

Long story short, after a blur of meetings and appointments with the oncologist, radiation oncologist, genetics counselor, general surgeon, plastic surgeon, mental health counselor, and a breast MRI (which revealed a tumor in the left breast as well as the one that had been biopsied on the right side) surgery was scheduled. Bi-lateral mastectomy...or otherwise known as amputation of the breasts.

“You’re lucky you caught it early!” Lucky? Seriously, don’t ever tell a woman with cancer she’s “lucky”- she might just punch you in the face. They took nodes with the mastectomy and the cancer was contained within the breast tissue. No invasive cancer. That meant no chemo and no radiation. Just weeks of recovery and months of reconstruction, whose outcome is beyond disappointing for me.

So that’s my story. Why do I want to share it? Because if you feel a lump- **FOR THE LOVE OF GOD- HAVE IT BIOPSIED!** That’s my message and any chance I get to get up on my soapbox with that message, I do! Also, I’m a plus sized gal, and we face additional challenges with body image to begin with and reconstruction.

Why do I want to be a face? I am blunt and unafraid to talk about every part of this experience: body image, depression, frustration, empowering yourself, letting others help you, dealing with people who expect that once the cancer is gone you’ll just “get over it” and move on, frustration with sexualization of the disease, and how offensive “save the ta-tas” really is. I want to be there for women going through the same experience, not because I have answers, but because I have empathy, and I want to get up on my soapbox and say- **GET IT BIOPSIED** so you know for sure.”

