

Sarah Crowell

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in August of 2013 at age 37. My cancer survival story starts in 1990 at age 13 when I was diagnosed with leukemia. The treatment for leukemia included high dose chemotherapy, total body radiation and then a bone marrow transplant. These treatments saved my life but left me with a high risk to develop breast cancer. My experience at age 13 inspired me to become an oncology nurse. I was working on the oncology unit at Forsyth Medical Center when I was diagnosed with Invasive Ductal Carcinoma. You might think that because I am an oncology nurse receiving this news may not be as difficult as it would be for some. Well, that was not the case. It was very emotional for me. At first I was very upset and angry at life thinking "it was not fair, I had cancer when I was 13, I shouldn't have to go through this now!". Well, I don't make the rules. I decided to turn my attitude around and find purpose and meaning my diagnosis. Have a positive attitude can really change the course of your journey.

Due to having a high risk for reoccurrence my doctors and I decided it would be best for me to have a bilateral mastectomy. I had my breast surgery and reconstruction with expanders in October of 2013. Unfortunately, I did have a positive lymph node so I needed chemotherapy. My chemotherapy was completed in January of 2014 and I had my implant surgery in February. Fortunately my tumor was estrogen positive so I will be on Tamoxifen for the next 10 years.

My personal experience with breast cancer has made an incredible impression on me. A patient's support team can make all the difference in how they cope with their diagnosis and treatment. Through my experience I became very passionate about the Breast Nurse Navigator role and I wanted to give back to others going through this journey. In August of 2015 I was offered a position as a Breast Nurse Navigator at the Derrick L. Davis Cancer Center with Novant. In this position I am able to help guide and support patients through their journey from day of diagnosis to finish of treatment. I help set up initial consults with physicians, see patients at different stages along their journey, and call at significant mile stones of treatment. Knowing that a navigator is always available and "has your back" can make all the difference in the world.

I would love an opportunity to reach out further into the community to help other women facing breast cancer. Currently I volunteer with Cancer Services with their Blood Cancer Wellness Group and Breast Cancer Support group. I also speak at numerous events with Cancer Services including the Cancer Transitions program for cancer survivors. I also volunteer with the Young Adult Cancer group. I would be honored to work with the Komen team as well.