

## Former GMH nurse fights ovarian cancer by hitting it head on

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Cindy Fisher recently breezed through the doors of Gothenburg Memorial Hospital wearing shorts and a short-sleeved shirt.

The day before, the former nurse at GMH had traveled to Litchfield for a volleyball game and drove on to Broken Bow to have supper with a sister.

It was late so the Moorefield resident spent the night and drove to the hospital for an interview the next day.

And for a shot to promote the production of white blood cells to boost her immune system.

Fisher is battling ovarian cancer, which seems surprising given her energy level this day.

In April of 2009, the 56-year-old was working nights at GMH.

After her shift one day, Fisher had a routine pap smear.

During the examination, the physician's assistant felt a mass in her abdomen and sent her to the hospital for a CT scan.

"I knew I was in trouble when I saw her eyes," Fisher said.

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By the time Fisher received the results by phone at home, she learned not only was it ovarian cancer but there were questionable spots on her liver and fluid in her abdomen.

She called her husband, Bob, who worked at Tenneco in Cozad, to tell him.

Then Fisher cried.

The next morning, she and Bob were on their way to see a surgeon in Omaha.

Two days later, a tumor was removed, a biopsy taken and exploratory surgery done.

A lymph node showed signs of disease but the cancer had not metastasized, or spread, to other organs.

Fisher underwent eight treatments of chemotherapy for six months but in April 2011 blood work showed the cancer had returned.



Six more treatments followed into the fall and more were scheduled the following March.

On Oct. 15, she finished her last treatment of another round of chemotherapy.

“I was told I would never be cured of ovarian cancer but as long as my body was strong enough to handle the chemotherapy, I’d be okay,” Fisher said.

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Fisher also knows that most women with ovarian cancer, who have a lymph node affected, live five to seven years after the first diagnosis.

But Fisher has fought from the beginning.

“I knew when I found out I had cancer that the only way to deal with it was to hit it head on,” she said. “I knew my attitude would be important.”

And exercise, according to her surgeon.

Swimming at the indoor pool in Eustis helped with aches and pains and in building stamina, she said.

An emotional challenge is learning to take care of herself.

She noted that she’s had to give up a large share of her care giving role as a nurse and to the Fisher’s adult son, Michael, who suffered a rare stroke at age 10 and still suffers seizures

“Caregivers often forget to take care of themselves,” she said.

Fisher admitted that she also struggles with depression and takes medication to help manage the symptoms.

Dealing with cancer has shown Fisher how to appreciate each day.

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“The sunsets, the leaves now are gorgeous and laughter,” she said. “I’ve learned to laugh more.”

The Fishers have also taken the advice of Cindy’s oncologist who encouraged them to travel if that’s what they wanted to do the next couple of years.

Bob is now self employed so the couple bought a camper last spring and has traveled to Branson, MO, and to Washington and Oregon.

“We always wanted to retire and travel with a camper, we’re just doing it early,” she said.

Another blessing is Fisher’s growing dependence on God.

“I’ve grown closer to the Lord and to my family,” she said. about Bob, Michael of Omaha and daughter, Sara, who lives in Texas.

The support of her family, friends, church and coworkers at GMH has been tremendous, she said.

On Sept. 8, GMH coworkers participated in a walk in Omaha to bring about awareness of ovarian cancer and to raise money for research.

Registered nurse Deb Dike, said Fisher gave strength to others at GMH even before she was diagnosed with cancer.

“She’s been through so much already,” Dike said. “When I went through bad times, she always knew when to give me a word of encouragement.”

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Although Fisher had to quit work as a nurse at GMH last March, she still teaches cardiopulmonary resuscitation classes when needed.

A key verse for Fisher now and when she was first diagnosed is Psalms 46:10:

“Be still and know that I’m God.”

[ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com](mailto:ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com)

308-537-3636