

HIV, Cancer and COVID



A TRIPLE THREAT

Patrick



- Patrick is a 57 year old man who is Living with HIV for over 35 years. He was addicted to heroin for about 20 years but has been drug free for about 15
- He was diagnosed with AIDS in 1996 when he was referred to me for palliative and end of life care.
- He was being discharged after a serious bout with Pneumocystis Pneumonia and Candidiasis.
- He wished to die at home

Patrick



- Patrick was lucky to have survived his initial diagnosis at a time when the “cocktail” for HIV was found to be successful in slowing the disease.
- He has had a manageable Viral Load and Cd4 count for the past 10 years
- In 2017 he was diagnosed with tonsillar cancer and underwent radiation, surgery and chemotherapy which he was able to handle with some loss of function but had returned to a quality life with his wife and family.
- And then came 2020 and COVID

Nancy



- Nancy was only 19 years old when she was diagnosed with AIDS in 2000 while in college. She had recurring vaginal candida and after many misdiagnoses she tested positive for HIV. She too was able to benefit from the HARRT (highly active antiretroviral therapy).
- She had a child with her long time boyfriend in 2014 and after delivery was found to have cervical cancer.
- She underwent surgery and chemotherapy and felt pretty well and was able to manage her toddler and young child
- She had not had any reoccurrence of her cancer
- And then came 2020 and COVID

Tim



- Tim was a 33 year old man when he was diagnosed with HIV in 2004. He presented with fatigue loss of weight and oral candida that keep reoccurring.
- His viral load was 80,000 and Cd4 was 26.
- He started on HARRT and after about 6 months his viral load was in control and Cd4 recovered to mid 500's.
- He was working his full time job but noted rectal pain in 2017 and was diagnosed with rectal cancer.
- After a grueling year of radiation, surgery and chemotherapy he was left with some pain and very weak but recovering
- And then came 2020 and COVID

SOO how did things go?



- Patrick is still with us. His quality of life has changed dramatically
- He is left with the permanent need for O₂ due to pneumonitis and had to stop his Immunotherapy for his cancer because of the pulmonary overlap.
- He requires a walker and is fighting Depression

SOOO How did things go?



- Tim is still recovering but has had ongoing fatigue and “brain fog” He had several microbleeds and has had one reoccurrence of his rectal cancer so is undergoing treatment again.
- Nancy spent 9 weeks on a ventilator due to COVID and developed cardiomyopathy and sadly died unable to see her child or husband because she never regained consciousness

Some of the issues



- Managing 3 life altering issues that impact the immune system
- Providing support for a patient who was feeling that they had really beat the struggle of HIV and cancer and now has to face another life threatening illness
- It is exhausting and deflating for both the patient and provider

Issues



- All those moments when we both felt
“ they just couldn’t catch a break”

Sorting out the complexities of medications that all impact the immune function and then add in things like cardiomyopathy, pneumonitis and excessive fatigue.

Watching a young mother die alone knowing it goes against all we have ever learned about a peaceful end of life for a patient and family.

We can’t forget the impact on the providers!!

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Thanks