

MY STORY

My name is Ben Lindquist and I am a cancer survivor.

And I want more people to be AWARE of Testicular Cancer and realize that no one is immune to it!!!

In January of 2004 I was getting ready to enter my 6th year of umpiring professional baseball. "I've been active, athletic, and healthy all my life, why should I go see a doctor for a physical?" that is what I told my girlfriend Jennifer when she mentioned I should go get a physical. We were talking about getting married, and she wanted me to make sure I was looking out for myself and our future together. I commented, "I had a physical 6 years ago when I got into baseball, and they said I was healthy," to which she replied, "then go again and they can tell you you're healthy and be done with it." Jennifer, who in October 2005 became my wife, is a Registered Nurse so I tend to take her health advice seriously, and it's a good thing I did.

I made an appointment to see Dr. Adnan Munir and have my routine physical that she insisted I get. All was going well until he asked me to drop my pants and cough. It was then he noticed something that seemed abnormal. I had one testicle that was significantly larger than the other, and that was of concern to him, to me it was just the way I had always been.

After making my appointment for an ultrasound, I started to question what was going on. Although, I was still relatively unconcerned, as I figured I would go for my test and they would tell me everything was just fine and to have a nice life. While viewing the enlarged testicle (which ended up being fine) during the ultrasound, they also took a look at the smaller testicle. This is where the problems started. It seems I had a lump about the size of a "frozen pea".

I then made an appointment to see Dr. Ichabod Jung, a Urologist at WNY Urology. He informed me that it could just be a cyst, but that it also had a chance to be cancerous tumor. After 30 days of antibiotics the lump had not decreased in size, which would have occurred if it were a cyst. It was now March and I was leaving in 3 days for spring training and would not return to town until September. With that in mind he made me schedule an appointment for the week I was set to return to Jamestown, and told me to keep an eye on its size through self-testing and to contact him immediately if I noticed any changes or had any discomfort.

The summer went by and I felt no size change in the lump to be concerned of and never felt even the slightest bit of discomfort. September rolled around, the season was over with and I returned home to Jamestown. I went in for my appointment and a 3rd ultrasound. Again, this is when we discovered more problems! In six months the lump had tripled in size, and was now "the size of a marble"! Dr. Jung told me it needed to come out!!!

Here I was, an athletic 27 years old, engaged to be married, and I was going under the knife to have one of my testicles removed. If she would have let me, I would have lost a few nights of my memories to an over-abundance of alcohol intake, but Jennifer was better than that, and knew I was better than that. She talked and walked me through all the scenarios, and made it easier for me to comprehend. I was

mad at God and wondering why he would allow such a thing like this to happen to me, and she kept reminding me that everything happens for a reason. To which I would agree and say, "Your right. He has a plan for me and for us. Everything happens for a reason." I wasn't sure what that reason was, but I knew I needed to trust in God and believe that I would be ok when it was all over and done.

We went to the Cleveland Clinic to give them my "family insurance policy" (my nickname for sperm banking), just in case I had unforeseen side effects from the possible radiology/chemotherapy or other procedures. October 8th came and it was time to go under the knife. I wore what I thought was a very fitting t-shirt that I bought a couple of years previous when I went white-water rafting, it said "Most sports only require one ball!"

I can do this. That was what I kept telling myself. Jennifer, both of our families and many of our friends, were there to help me every step of the way whenever I was beginning to get angry and question "why is this happening to me?"

Dr. Jung said the surgery went great. They were able to extract the entire lump, and they would have me back in the office next week for the test results. On October 13th Dr. Jung informed me that it was cancerous, but we had caught it early and I was only in stage 1. He mentioned that I was very fortunate that Jennifer insisted I go to the doctor, and that I actually took her advice. If I had waited until I noticed or felt that there was a problem, the results could have been much different. The lump that tripled in size in 6 months could have grown out of control in the time that it would have taken me to realize that something was wrong.

After a 15 day treatment of radiation from Dr. Stanley Byun's office, and years of follow-up appointments between Jung and Byun, I am proud to be a 14+ year survivor of testicular cancer! I am also proud of our 2 naturally born children (no withdrawals from that "family insurance policy"). Our son Branston was born in May 2007 and daughter Kennedy in December 2008.

I was treated very kindly, personally, and effectively by our local medical providers, and am happy that I was able to stay local for my treatments. Anytime you hear the word cancer, it gets scary, but the doctors and their staff all made me feel very comfortable every step of the way. The support of my wife, and our family and friends was also very important as I felt we went through the situation together, rather than me trying to battle it all on my own.

I can't stress enough how important it is to see a doctor on a regular basis for a routine physical or appointment. We can't always tell that something is wrong with us, and neither can they, but our chances of beating the odds are much greater with the support of physicians and family!

Benjamin A. Lindquist

"1 Ball" and Proud - Testicular Cancer Survivor, October 2004