

## **Excerpt from chapter 7**

It was not even 24 hours following my PET scan that my oncologist called my cell phone.

"Krishana, after reviewing your PET scan results, I want to start treatment immediately, as in next week. Between your blood tests and the PET scan, we've detected lymphoma cells in your bone marrow. This is quite serious, but very treatable. I would like to schedule you to have a port put in on Monday and begin treatment on Tuesday. Can we begin this process?"

I stood by the kitchen table holding onto the closest chair. There wasn't even time to stop in that moment and think about what I needed to say yes to. This was life or death.

"Yes, you can make those appointments for me," I replied.

"Okay, Connie will call you back with the details. We will see you in our office next week," she said.

"Thank you," I signed off.

And with that, the week on steroids continued. However, now we had to add in actual steroids, as part of my treatment plan. I rarely took over-the-counter medication for headaches. I wasn't sure my body would know what to do with all of this medication.

After posting an update on my Tandem Living blog, I received an email from Dawn, my future teammate living in Austria. With her oncology expertise she wrote:

*One thing you could ask the surgeon: After he/she places the port he will have to check for correct placement. Ask him to heplock it and leave the port accessed for your chemo*

*tomorrow. Sometimes they don't know when chemo is scheduled to start and it's better if he can leave the huber needle in the port overnight so it will be better for you tomorrow. Don't worry if he can't/doesn't want to, it's just helpful for you and the nurses tomorrow.*

*Love, Dawn*

*Heplock, accessed, huber needle?* I had no idea what any of this meant. This felt like my first German language learning class. I printed off the email and took it with me to the hospital. Hopefully, someone would understand what this meant. All I knew is that it could make my first treatment day easier for me, and since I didn't even understand what getting chemo really meant, easier sounded good.

The night before my port surgery, my brother and his family came to visit me. I wouldn't be able to spend time with my nephew Kaleb following treatment because my immune system would be compromised and I would be susceptible to germs. I had been told that Kaleb would go into his living room and pray for me, with as many words and understanding that a four-year-old could handle. He didn't understand what was going on or even what cancer meant. But he knew this wasn't good and that his Aunt Krishy was sick.

"Kaleb, do you remember the song about how God is bigger than the boogie-man?" I asked.

"Yes," he looked at me with wide eyes.

"Well, our God is also bigger than the cancer boogie man." I told him.

I could see his mind thinking about what I had said. He smiled, motioned for a high five and said, "Niiiiice!"

I hugged him tight. To think my big God would use this little guy to pray for me. *I'm overwhelmed by You.*

Monday's port placement went fast. The surgery to place the port only took a few minutes. I woke up in the operating room. I could hear the surgeon and nurses talking about the basketball tournament. Worried that I would experience some trauma of waking up too soon, I quickly spoke up, "Am I supposed to be awake right now?"

They looked at me and smiled. "Yes, everything is finished. We'll get you to recovery and get you home soon."

The left side of my body was sore. Within a week, I had a lymph node taken out from under my left arm and a port placed below my collar bone on my left side. My body was tired, but I had to keep going. I needed treatment to kill the cancer cells taking over my body.