Navigating the Road Ahead

- My Story from diagnosis to today
- How I stayed Sane

- Taking a medical leave
  - Challenges & Recommendations

- Returning to work
  - Challenges & Recommendations

- Targeted treatments
  - What are they?
  - Cost of Living Vs. Quality of Life
What does the face of illness look like?

Staying Sane

- Request medical results and copies of scans.
  - Read through results and flag any questions you may have. (Sometimes questions come up after you've left the hospital.
- Doing research for myself by looking into clinical trials or current publications.
  - [http://www.ontario.canadiancancertrials.ca](http://www.ontario.canadiancancertrials.ca)
  - [http://www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)
Staying Sane cont…..

- Keep information organized.
  - I used an large accordion folder.
  - Only keep pertinent information in the file i.e. Test results, Info sheets for medications, Dr. Notes, Insurance Information, etc.
  - As the file grows (and it will) consolidate information.
    - I used Excel and created a Master sheet of all my appointments and subsequent results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
<th>Test Requested</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Staying Sane cont…..

- Start a blog or email updates to keep family and friends in the loop.
  - Saves time, repetition and allows YOU to control what information is disseminated.

- Be direct with friends and family regarding your needs, wants and wishes.
  - If you don’t want visitors...just say so!!

- Try to keep active, walking no matter how little will help maintain cardiovascular health. Yoga is another gentle exercise.

- MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) a form of meditation.
Taking a Medical Leave

**Challenges**
- Can be a very convoluted process
  - i.e. Calling Multiple Departments
  - Dealing with deadlines for forms
- In an acute health crisis do you know who to call?
- Paperwork and lots of it!

**Recommendations**
- Streamline the process
  - Contacting one person who can co-ordinate multi-departmental requirements
  - Have a specialist who deals only with leaves of absence (Medical and Parental)
  - Have staff respond to questions in a timely manner.
- Publish the contact names for personnel dealing with leaves.
- Allow extended hours for contacting HR or provide alternative contacts such as email.

Returning to Work

**Challenges**
- Deciding if you are ready.
- Co-coordinating stakeholders
- Gradual load vs. All in
- Who needs to know and what do you tell them
- Stress and anxiety
- What happens if I get sick again?

**Recommendations**
- Keep in contact with employees prior to return
- Arranging a meeting with all stakeholders to discuss a return to work plan.
- Allow accommodations in work (flexible hours, number of days worked)
- Can employees work from home?
- Recommend supports to employees and provide them.
- Assist employee to manage stress
  - Provide internal programming or recommend external programs
  - Promote a healthy workplace
Targeted Treatments...What are they?

- What is Cancer?
- How does Chemotherapy work?
- How do Targeted Therapies work?
- Risks and Side effects

Loss of Normal Growth Control

Normal cell division
- Cell Suicide or Apoptosis
- Cell damage—no repair

Cancer cell division
- First mutation
- Second mutation
- Third mutation
- Fourth or later mutation
- Uncontrolled growth

Uncontrolled growth
**DNA Mutation**

- **Normal gene**
  - DNA: CAAGCTAACT

- **Single base change**
  - DNA: CAAGCAACT

- **Additions**
  - DNA: CAAGCTACT

- **Deletions**
  - DNA: CAAGAACT

**Oncogenes**

- **Normal cell**
  - Normal genes regulate cell growth

- **Cancer cell**
  - Oncogenes accelerate cell growth and division

- **Mutated/damaged oncogene**
Proto-Oncogenes and Normal Cell Growth

Normal Growth-Control Pathway

Growth factor ➔ Receptor ➔ Signaling enzymes ➔ Transcription factors ➔ Cell nucleus ➔ DNA ➔ Cell proliferation

Targeted Treatments...What are they?

- What is Cancer?
  - Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells
  - Cells divide too quickly
  - Cells forget how to die

- How does Chemotherapy work?
  - Works by stopping or slowing the growth of cancer cells, which grow and divide quickly
  - Can also harm healthy cells

- How does Targeted Therapy work?
  - Interrupts or targets signals or changes in the cell that are needed for a cancer to keep growing or proliferating
    - Enzyme inhibitors (Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitors, mTOR Inhibitors, Growth Factor inhibitors, etc.)
    - Apoptosis inducing drugs
    - Angiogenesis inhibitors

- Risks and Side effects
Cost of Living Vs. Quality of Life

**Chemotherapy**
- Typically Covered by OHIP.
- Requires regular visits to hospital to be applied.
- It is used as a frontline method for all patients.
- Usually used in conjunction with other therapies such as radiation or post-surgery.
- Targets all rapidly dividing cells and can cause damage to innocuous cells.
- Side effects can become life threatening or cause permanent damage to other systems in the body.

**Targeted Therapy**
- Can be very costly and are not covered by OHIP.
- Can be taken orally but may require monitoring by medical staff.
- Used only for patients who have been identified.
- If patient is identified early, they can avoid other invasive treatments.
- Targets specific cellular processes resulting in less cell damage to healthy cells.
- Side effects tend to be less serious in nature.

Resources for Employees

- [http://www.wellspring.ca](http://www.wellspring.ca)
  Cancer begins with a diagnosis... but it doesn't end with medical treatment. When you or a loved one has been diagnosed with cancer you hope for a cure, but you can't wait for one. You need to cope with cancer today.

- [http://www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)
  A national, community-based organization of volunteers, whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer.

- [http://talkabouthealth.com](http://talkabouthealth.com)
  A welcoming and caring community that has come together to meet, share, and learn with each other. We welcome patients, families, caregivers, survivors, professionals, and organizations. All members are encouraged to share their unique knowledge and experiences.
Resources for Employees

- **http://www.imemanangels.org**
  Imerman Angels carefully matches and individually pairs a person touched by cancer (a cancer fighter or survivor) with someone who has fought and survived the same type of cancer (a Mentor Angel). Cancer caregivers (spouses, parents, children and other family and friends of fighters) also receive 1-on-1 connections with other caregivers and survivors. These 1-on-1 relationships inspire hope and offer the chance to ask personal questions and receive support from someone who is uniquely familiar with the experience. The service is absolutely free and helps anyone touched by any type of cancer, at any cancer stage level, at any age, living anywhere in the world.

- **http://www.livestrong.org**
  We empower the cancer community to address the unmet needs of cancer survivors. To do so, we encourage collaboration, knowledge-sharing and partnership. Then, we develop evidence-based solutions to address both the common and unique problems survivors are facing around the world.

- **http://www.gildasclubtoronto.org**
  Gilda’s Club Greater Toronto, offers a wide array of support groups, workshops, lectures and social events, with a multitude of activities to choose from each month. Alternatively, our doors are open to anyone who may simply need some peaceful time alone in any one of our cozy rooms.

Young Adult Specific Orgs

- **http://www.youngadultcancer.ca**
  A community of young adults diagnosed with cancer that provides information, support, skills and opportunity. YACC also has not so active retreats for the 18-39 set. Once again these are free except for travel costs to and from the retreat.

- **http://www.cancerclub.ca**
  Need medical or social help? Have a life-management problem? Want to see what RESOURCES there are near you? This is where you can find answers. Cancer may make you feel as if you are alone. But you don't have to be. CancerFightClub has created different ways for you to connect with your community.

- **http://www.thesearemyscars.org**
  A place where Young Adult Cancer fighters and survivors can connect to celebrate the power of their scars and to share the stories of how they got them.

- **http://www.survivethrive.org**
  Survive & Thrive Expeditions Inc. is dedicated to combining travel, adventure and in-depth reflection and exploration of the cancer journey into one unique life changing experience.

- **http://firstdescents.org**
  First Descents offers young adult cancer fighters and survivors a free outdoor adventure experience designed to empower them to climb, paddle and surf beyond their diagnosis, defy their cancer, reclaim their lives and connect with others doing the same.
Fertility Preservation

- [http://fertilefuture.ca](http://fertilefuture.ca)
  Provides fertility preservation information and support services to Canadian cancer patients and their families who are facing fertility-risking medical treatment, as well as oncology professionals.

- [http://www.myoncofertility.org](http://www.myoncofertility.org)
  Contains expert videos and survivors stories and informs patients about the potential effect of cancer treatments on their fertility and their options to preserve it.

- [http://www.fertilehope.org](http://www.fertilehope.org)
  Information for cancer patients faced with infertility.

Mental Health

- [www.mentalhealthworks.ca](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca)
  Mental Health Works is a nationally available program of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) that builds capacity within Canadian workplaces to effectively address the many issues related to mental health in the workplace.

- [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)
  The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world's leading research centres in the area of addiction and mental health.

- [http://toronto.cmha.ca](http://toronto.cmha.ca)
  CMHA is a nation-wide, charitable organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness.

- [http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com](http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com)
  Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction brings together mindfulness meditation and yoga. Although MBSR is a training with potential benefits for all types of participants, historically, students have suffered from a wide range of chronic disorders and diseases.
Final Thoughts

For Employees/Patients
- Cancer sucks but how we deal with it doesn't have to!
- Advocate for yourself.
- Ask questions.
- Live, Love, and Laugh!

For Employers
- Open communication is key
- Streamlined procedure for taking a leave and returning to work.
- Accommodate employees so that they can work to their strengths.

For Insurers
- Targeted treatments are here and they work
- Most patients that require them are a rarity rather than the norm.
- Yes the cost is high, but quality of life is priceless.

Thanks for listening