

Annette: Stage IV Melanoma to 5+ Years Cancer Free

So I'm Annette , married- still. Got through everything, just celebrated 25 years actually this year. So 25 years married. So before I was diagnosed we, my husband and I moved, from Ontario over to BC with two kids when diagnosed in 2013. My daughter was in grade six and my son was in grade three. So I'm here in Victoria. My daughter just entered middle school. My son was in elementary school. I am an occupational therapist. I guess when I was first diagnosed I didn't really know the severity of it. I didn't really understand. My GP told me when I was in a doctor's office by myself. Drove home, stopped the car, phoned my sister, cried with my sister and then drove to my husband's office actually and pulled him out of a meeting and just sat in the car and said " you have to come out of your meeting, you have to come down to the car, we have to talk."

But I guess he was in just as much-- I don't know-- we didn't know. Right. And so he kind of-- we talked and then he went back up to his meeting and I went home and we kind of carried on our day. So it was a bit of not really understanding. I think once we started-- or he really started looking into what melanoma was and what the different stages were and things like that. That's when it kind of started to hit home a little bit more. Then obviously I had it removed. I had the mole removed and the edges weren't clear. So then I-- that's when I think it really hit . When we had our first appointment with our plastic surgeon who was going to do the two centimeter excising around where the mole was. He kind of told us the depth of what the melanoma was. And I think before that we didn't know that. It didn't mean anything to me-- like I said before, my husband did the original search on the internet and melanoma is bad. So you really don't want to look at anything or any of the stats on the internet around melanoma because they're not good. So he said " Stay off the internet. Don't research it. If you want to know anything, let me know. I'll look for it. I'll give you the the Coles note version of what I find."

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Just so I wouldn't go down that Google rabbit hole of all the bad stats and get my brain going there. So he understood more clearly what this; I think it was eight millimeters, which is the worst it could be, basically is what I had. He actually passed out in the doctor's office. So he was out and I'm like okay, great. Now I have this passed out husband. And then I think that's when the reality kind of set in, that this is actually quite bad. So we went through the surgical process. It's a frustrating process. I mean at this point I hadn't even seen an oncologist.

It takes six weeks to get it-- like I felt like my arm needed to be-- my mole was on my lower arm, kind of in my armpit, but on my arm. So I felt like I just really wanted my arm cut off to be honest. I'm like, just get this off and get it out of here. But it wasn't really working that fast. There was cancer in the lymph nodes. So once I got to oncology there wasn't a lot. He didn't really offer a lot of treatment. This was my first oncologist, who, later on we ended up switching to another oncologist. He's very smart and I'm sure he-- I had a CT by that point and there was stuff, there were little nodes found in my chest and in my liver.

So I think he kinda knew that it was Stage 4 already and didn't say anything and just kind of waited. We were waiting until the second CT to see if the nodes had grown to actually do the diagnosis of Stage 4. But I have a feeling that he already knew because he didn't ask to get the rest of my lymph nodes removed. And then we waited until the next CT. And I guess my brain didn't go there. I just didn't think it would be Stage 4 and when we went to get the results of the Stage 4, like of the CT scan again we just-- we went to the clinic. We were picking up my daughter from guitar lessons. On the way home, just didn't really think much of it, then we found out it was Stage 4.