



Darlene Hochstetler
Oligodendroglioma (Brain Tumor)

In July 1999, I was diagnosed with a grade 2 brain tumor in the right-front temporal lobe. Upon being diagnosed that day - which I will always remember - I felt my heart fall on the floor and roll under my chair out of sight. In that very moment, I put my life on hold because I wasn't promised tomorrow; I was handed a death sentence.

I had a seven-hour surgery to remove a tumor the size of a package of cigarettes. However, due to the tumor reaching very close to the brain stem, 3 to 5 percent could not be removed. I was devastated to learn the doctors couldn't remove it all.

Two weeks post-surgery, I needed an additional surgery to treat a major staph infection. My bone flap was removed, and I was put on strong antibiotics for seven weeks. After waiting another three months, I had reconstructive surgery. I was awake during the surgery, but couldn't alert the doctors to my dilemma. Being awake during surgery was so traumatic to my brain, I kept having flashbacks. After one flashback, I had a grand mal seizure and stopped breathing. My husband was right there with me, and with God's help, got me breathing again.

At times, it felt like I took two steps forward and then two back. After a while a person grows weary of not feeling good. I had fears of the future. Cancer is synonymous with pain and suffering. I prayed to the Lord and gave Him my fears. One day, He revealed this truth to me; you are so fearful for tomorrow that you are not enjoying today. I resolved to enjoy today and trust Him with each tomorrow

God has brought some wonderful people into my life that I would have never met otherwise. God has been with me every step of the way. Without God, I would have given up many times. My faithful husband and my precious family have been supporters all the way. This experience has taught me to be an encourager, reaching out to others. I treasure each new day. I don't want to take life for granted as if I were promised tomorrow. I celebrate life, every breath.

The remaining part of the tumor was carefully monitored every few months with regular MRIs. I took oral chemotherapy from December of 2003 to January of 2004. In 2007, the doctors discovered the tumor grew again. The decision was made to undergo radiation and oral chemotherapy for six weeks. I also had Tomotherapy at Goshen Cancer Center to be close to home during treatment. The doctors wanted to hit the cancer hard enough to stop its growth, but didn't expect to completely eradicate it.

My six-week follow-up MRI showed better results than expected, as did each MRI following. The doctors kept saying, 'it's beyond what we'd dared to hope for'; it is a miracle from God. After all, He's the great healer. The last two MRIs showed that the tumor is gone; as the doctor said, it's nothing but a miracle from God.