

Roller coasters aren't much fun when it's all about your wife's health

This has been quite a week. Yesterday I got a phone call from my wife's doctor that nobody wants to get. Ever. She thought my wife was too weak to continue treatment. So there's this angry cancer in her lung, and now a couple other places, growing like a week, and the doctor thinks it's time to stop going after it, after just one chemo session?

The problem is that the doctor, speaking with my wife, was getting signals that she was in a worse way than she is. Truthfully, Karen's feeling better today than she was a day before her first chemo/immunology treatment last Friday. Especially encouraging was that her weight had stabilized, at 131 pounds. Previously it had been dropping 2.5 pounds per week, a trend that wasn't good. I honestly feel that the weight stabilization came from feeling better, mentally, because she was looking forward to and finally getting treatment, doing something about that quickly-growing angry cancer.

And then this morning it gets worse... we'd managed to convince the doctor yesterday to continue with treatment because, after all, her blood values weren't too bad. But Karen had sent an email to her regular doctor thinking she had a UTI, and the cancer doctor saw that and thought no, can't do treatment today because it could cause the UTI infection to go wild. Except that it might not even be a UTI infection but rather just irritation due to flushing out the chemo stuff. An actual known side effect of Keytruda, the immunology agent.

That was the lowest of low points. But, things changed shortly afterward, when further conversations between doctors about her collapsed lung determined that the first order of business **HAD** to be recovering function in her left lung. That time was running out on that. And for working on her lung, there needed to be some time between prior chemo treatment. So, **IF** they could get going **QUICKLY** on her lung, then it could be rationalized everything's working out as best possible. And they managed to move mountains to get her scheduled for Tuesday! Yay!

But geez, the choices that have to be made. Restore the lung's function (which deflated because the cancer had choked off the airway to the left side) and give the cancer more time to grow, or sacrifice the lung and just go after the cancer. The latter choice doesn't work out too well in the end, if the cancer moves over to the other lung, so this choice, today, makes sense.

The whole journey started out with a choice that, in retrospect, looks questionable. We had an opportunity, we thought, to go after this one small (at that time) spot in the lung, and hopefully delay further recurrence for some time. And also learn something about the cancer from the tumor. But ultimately it seems we just made the cancer angry and aggressive, and would have been better off starting chemo immediately. We had one of the world leading experts on Karen's particular type of cancer helping us, along with very good people at Kaiser. Just one of those things, unexpected variables that don't play out as planned.

Right now, the only thing that matters is fixing my wife. I'm not ready to be alone. Emotions come in waves, and I got through everything before that last paragraph before another wave just hit. Please, God, give me more time with Karen.