

Karen's new plant



Sometimes life throws the really unexpected your way. Karen's Stage IV cancer wasn't so unexpected; this is her 4th round with breast cancer and we knew dealing with it would be a process for the rest of her life. You don't want to be thinking about that all the time, but with her mom and two sisters all losing the battle to breast cancer, Karen has, so far, proved to be more... resilient? Still one sister left untouched by cancer, hopefully something not subject to change.

Karen is doing so well these day. It was scary for her to lose so much weight, so fast, but now that she's stabilized at 130 or so, she's benefitting greatly from being much lighter on her feet. A fair amount of pain & nausea, which is where that plant comes in. It will never be harvested; she uses THC edibles, with different strains useful for different things. Smoking/vaping is not an option when you have cancer that's spread to your lungs. Not sure it should really be an option for anyone; there's a lot of evidence that smoke is smoke and any material that's burned and inhaled is going to be problematic. The primary advantage to inhaling is speed, the effects being nearly instantaneous. With edibles, you need to plan ahead of time as it takes about 45 minutes to start feeling better.

Wednesday is the big day for us; she goes in for her first body scan since starting her immuno & chemotherapy. We may get some clues as to what the future looks like, but things could look a lot scarier than they really are. Stage IV is not curable; you're hoping to slow it down and, in some cases, see it disappear entirely for a while. And it may in fact be slowing down, but there's no benchmark scan to compare to (because, as mentioned, this will be her first scan after treatment began, and we do know that prior to treatment, the cancer was growing wildly, having already caused the collapse of her left lung).

Thankfully the scan is fairly early in the day, so the initial results won't be dingling my phone late at night, when I won't be in a position to do anything but fear the worst. Maybe others aren't like me, but "bad" news towards the end of the day, or during the night, seems a lot worse than bad news delivered earlier in the day. It takes time for me to figure things out and come up with a way of looking at things that I'm comfortable with.

Any way I look at it, it's going to be a long day Wednesday. And then another couple of long days until Friday, when we see the Oncologist and decipher everything. Of course, I'll have already tried to do a lot of that beforehand.

In the meantime, we hope that her voice changes (almost disappearing) are the result of the immune drug (Keytruda) and not the

cancer pressing against her airways again. And we hope to join the small group of decade-long Stage IV folk who have somehow managed to beat the odds!