

Overview – Getting through the Treatment

The treatment day... You have to devise ways of coping with the period waiting for your treatment to happen, so the way we dealt with it was they became shopping days, my favourite pastime, and basically, you were told, "Right, come back for your treatment at four o'clock", and this was at 11 o'clock in the morning, so we would make a decision, where are we going to, and I sat like a good boy, having a cup of coffee, while my wife went shopping.

We were mindful of the day of treatment, three days afterwards was sickness, so what we done there was we prepared a wee plan that, the day of the treatment, prior to the treatment, we would go out and have a meal together.

We made sure, if we were going for a hospital appointment, that we made it into either a lunch date or a coffee in the afternoon, so it wasn't just a hospital appointment.

That worked out very well for us because we'd know the next three days was going to be quite trying, but the beauty of the next three days, it was coming to an end as well, so then we looked forward to [a feast]. So, it's so important that you stay positive and build a wee plan.

Another thing that they don't tell you about is the medication side of things. Everything is explained in great detail to you by the oncologist and by the staff in the treatment unit, about the effects of the tablets that your partner is going to be getting for their treatment, but then when the person who's in treatment goes to their own GP, they're treated for the symptoms that they're displaying to the GP, but sometimes you just sit and you look at it and you suddenly realise, well, hold on, it says not to take these tablets with these tablets. So, very...what I would recommend is: get to know your local pharmacist really well because they will help you out.

Don't feel stupid. I think some of us still feel they're the professional and we're not, right? Don't feel like that. They're people just the same as us. If you don't understand something, ask them to explain.

We discovered very rapidly that people who have been close friends – and I'll use this term advisedly – struggle with the diagnosis, and people will start to take a step back. The way we'd deal with it is this: if Carol is feeling well, we'll go somewhere and we'll post it on Facebook that this is where we are and there'll be photographs of her and she'll be smiling and she'll have a glass of wine. We've discovered that that's the way of letting the people who are afraid or embarrassed, or whatever way you want to put it, of making contact with you, but, trust me, people will surprise you. You will have a core of people there who will bend over backwards to help you, and people who can't deal with it.

Because you are the one that's doing all of the caring and, you know, you're going to the appointments and things, everybody's asking you a thousand and one questions, and sometimes you don't have the answers, and I think probably one of the hardest things of caring for somebody is you have no control, and taking offers of help from wherever you can get it, you know, whether it's the next-door neighbour, whether it's granny and granddad, whether it's friends, or other support services that are out there, it's really important to just take that time out for yourself.