

INSPIRATION

in(t)-spe-'rā-shen *n* 1. a divine or supernatural influence 2. to be an animating, enlivening, or exalting influence on another; to spur one to act 3. to draw forth or bring out

One of OUR OWN

by Kelly Desatnik

The Diagnosis

Karen had been living with Fibrocystic Disease, a condition classified by non-cancerous breast lumps ranging from microscopic cysts to golf ball sized lumps, so she was used to finding frequent abnormalities in her breasts. About two months before she was officially diagnosed, Karen found an unusual lump that she felt warranted further investigation. "I wasn't worried at first, but then, the lump didn't get any smaller. Concerned, I set up a mammogram in the medical building where I worked. After the radiologist examined the x-ray, I took one look at her face and knew the diagnosis was not good. I went to a million pieces. I never dreamt it would be me."

Immediately upon learning of this life altering news, Karen took comfort in her outstanding support network of long-time co-workers, family and friends. Dr. Carlross and Dr. Skinner, two physicians in her practice, admitted Karen into surgery the very next day.

Treatment

Karen opted to have a lumpectomy, a surgery where only the part of the breast containing the tumor and some of the surrounding healthy tissue is removed. She was relieved that of the 19 surrounding lymph nodes removed, none registered positive. Karen underwent eight cycles of intensive treatment consisting of four cycles of adriamycin cytoxin, four cycles of taxotere every three weeks, followed by 33 radiation treatments.

Recovery and Support

Throughout Karen's eight months of

Karen Shupe, an RN with Western Kentucky Hematology Oncology Group in Paducah, KY has spent 22 years caring for oncology patients. On July 31, 2003, Karen was diagnosed with breast cancer. In all her time as an oncology nurse, she never imagined that she would be on the other side of the table as a patient.



In all her time as an oncology nurse, Karen never imagined that she would be on the other side of the table as a patient.

treatment, she hardly ever missed a day of work. Work was her therapy and her patients and co-workers constantly supported her. When Karen began losing her hair, the women in her office threw her a surprise hat party. They all bought her a beautiful assortment of hats and scarves to choose from. This helped to make losing her hair a little more bearable.

As a cancer patient, Karen gained a new perspective on treatment that she later passed on to her patients. "When I lost all

of my hair, I got a wig, but didn't get the wig fitted. This was a mistake! Also, I learned that when you hair falls out, it really does hurt!"

When asked if this experience ever made her second-guess being an oncology nurse, Karen's response was, "My patients took as much care of me as I took of them. I truly believe there was a reason behind all of this and couldn't imagine working in any other field." OA