

The Concetta Guglietti Cancer Battle

Our commitment to Princess Margaret Hospital and the cure for Cancer originated with the onset of our mother's battle with the disease.

Concetta had a compassionate heart and a strong spirit and was the crown jewel of our family. Our mother embraced life unconditionally with much love and joy. She valued the relationships she had with her family, friends and community above all else, always energetic and active, so in May of 2003 when an Eco-Cardiogram discovered a 3" round tumor inside her heart, we were deeply shaken and scared. The situation was extremely dangerous and the doctors were amazed that she was still standing. Within 48 hours, Dr. Tirone David, a world renowned cardiologist at Toronto General performed an emergency surgery and successfully removed the tumor that was later revealed to be non-cancerous. We were relieved to believe that our mother was on the path to a full recovery.

But just seven short months later, in December of 2003, we were hit with more devastating news. Our mother was diagnosed with Cervical Cancer. It seemed impossible given what we had just recently been through, but we knew that as a family we would be strong together and face whatever needed to be done.

We listened carefully to the advice of our mother's doctors, Dr. Joan Murphy and Dr. Michael Milosevic of Princess Margaret Hospital, together with other medical authorities and made the best decision we could. We needed to begin treatment immediately as the Cancer had rapidly advanced past the point of surgery being the best option, so we proceeded with radiation, coupled that with some complimentary general health treatments and then later on with Chemotherapy.

We weren't in denial at this point but we felt completely blindsided by the situation. Our mother being seriously ill was unthinkable. She was our Superwoman, the person who was always took care of everyone else, the volunteer who organized or supported charities and community events, the one who mended fences between friends and family, the one who managed to make things right even when no one else could, the woman with the ever present smile and good nature couldn't possibly be sick. It was terrifying to acknowledge that our Superwoman wasn't invincible.

When Concetta began her treatments we made sure one of her four sons was with her at all times. Some days were busier than others, and some were more encouraging but on most days we found ways to laugh even when we felt like crying.

Looking back now, we took for granted how much fun our mom was. She was adamant that we laugh as hard as we work, and encouraged us to work hard and be proud of our accomplishments. Concetta wasn't one to take work lightly herself, she would not think twice to yielding a hammer or shovel or climbing a ladder. I still see her doing these things and smile to myself.

Our mother was asked to participate in a radiation research program that required her to have additional x-rays, monitoring and probing done during her radiation. This lengthened her treatment time and was more uncomfortable but she wanted to do her part in the fight against Cancer. She knew that the program might not do anything for her, but if it helped cure even one person someday it is worth doing and not signing up was not an option. She also asked that we do our part and help fund the program.

We did as she asked and also decided to fund an additional research program that focused on the earlier detection of Cervical and Uterine Cancer. My brothers and I truly believe that if our mother's Cancer was detected earlier she would be here with us today. Sometimes that's all it takes. Just knowing early enough could save the life of someone who means the world to you.

We absolutely know that Cancer CAN be beaten and there are many survivors to attest that. We are fundraising because we believe in PMH's powerful vision to conquer Cancer in our lifetime. We are battling one of the most daunting diseases of our time, one that has taken many loved ones too

early, too quickly and always unnecessarily. We cannot stand by and hope that it won't affect us – it will, the statistics show that with a new case detected every 8 minutes in Ontario, so if it's not you, it will be someone you know.

Not long ago, we were pleased to hear of the research progress towards the target of early detection as well as better and less painful treatments. Working together towards a cure provides hope and optimism, which is essential for anyone fighting Cancer.

Whether you are participating for yourself, or someone you care about or just because you know the seriousness of the disease and want to help – know that you can make and are making a difference today.

So we thank you for participating, donating and supporting our fundraising efforts. Without your generous commitment to Cancer research we would not see the advancements we have available to us today and the cure we will see in the near future.