

Why I am stood here

I was asked to give a talk today on some subjects like, Oncology, Dietitians, Fundraising, etc. So, I thought the best way to cover these subjects would be to talk about my experience of finding out I had Cancer of the Oesophagus and all that followed.

How it all Started

I was having regular Endoscopies as I suffered with Barratts Oesophagus, which is how they discovered this had progressed, and the biopsies came back cancerous. I was referred to Mr Maynard at the Churchill Hospital and came under another consultant Mr Marshall.

My first meeting with Bob Marshall

On my first meeting with Mr Marshall, he explained exactly what would happen to me and that the operation was major surgery. More major than open heart surgery. My reaction was Oh, sh... sugar (that was my shock NOT me referring to Mr Marshall. He is nice but I wouldn't call him sugar!!!!)

My Chemo

As for the Oncology side of things, I think I was relatively lucky as I did not have a tumour so I only needed two sessions of all day intravenous Chemo plus two weeks of pills after each session. The Oncologist Dr Nicola Warner was very good, in as much as she noticed where I lived and asked if I would prefer to be seen at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The staff were all very good and I was assigned a specific nurse who looked after me all day. This was all new to me and when I looked around at all the other patients having chemo, I thought what a miserable bunch but, on my second

visit I knew why they all looked miserable. I know it affects people differently, but I am sure a lot of you will agree it does make you feel nauseous and sick etc. I had a bit of a worry after my operation because I received a letter telling me I had an appointment with Dr Warner and my reaction was "Oh no, am I going to have to have more Chemo". Wrong... she wanted to tell me that my scan confirmed I was all clear.

My First Operation

This was my first major operation and stay in hospital, so I was not too sure what to expect. A friend of mine, who had a heart operation, a kidney operation, and a Cochlea Implant, told me that I have to treat the situation like I would when putting my car into the garage for repair – you have to trust them to do the right job. Does anyone want Mr Maynard to service their car?

I was a bit surprised that the day after my op' I was dragged (not literally) out of bed and walked up and down the ITU ward with all the tubes that had been inserted into me still there. I still remember the bloke's name because he came every day to do the same thing, walking me around the ward, then the hospital as far as I could cope with, telling me to breathe in through my nose and out through my mouth. His name was Bob, but he also responded to Barb...strange but true.

Nursing Staff in upper GI

I am sure that you will all agree the nursing staff are extremely good, both thorough and caring. The examples I have of this are as follows.

- Firstly, the evening that my draining tubes were taken out, I coughed and had an excruciating pain in my left side and screamed. Next thing I knew there were about eight nursing staff around my bed. I ended up going down to have my chest X-rayed about 1am only to be told I was okay, thankfully.
- Secondly, for some unknown reason my lower half was really swollen and the Doctor on the ward brought about three different people at various times to check me out and see what was going on. I was given a diuretic and eventually the swelling went down, and I looked okay.
- Thirdly, I poked my tongue out at Anne Phillips, because my mouth felt dry and horrible, not because I was being rude, and she immediately exclaimed, "Oh you have oral thrush. I will have to get you some medication and rushed off".

The food

I am sure we all have different feelings about the food and how it is presented to us. Pureed, I thought was disgusting. Even at home it never tasted the same as normal food, then soft and mashed which was better, slowly getting back to normal. Apart from the Dietitian coming to see me on a regular basis the booklets and information on the correct food was extremely good. Oh, and the Vampire, does anyone remember her, she came around every morning to take blood from you. I suppose it was to check your vitamin levels.

My 13 day stay in Hospital

As you all know the Consultant and/or his Registrar and team come round to see you every day. On one of these occasions they realised that my wound/incision was infected. I also had a chest infection and this Oral thrush. So not allowed home until I was fully on the mend and a District Nurse had been organised to visit me to change my dressings.

This leads me on to my next point.

Don't fib about how you feel after your Op

The guy in the next bed to me always said to the team each day that he felt great, no problems, always walked further than I could but when he was back in bed, to me he looked bright red in the face and panting with breath. He said he was told he was a textbook patient and released from hospital after seven days. I felt I was more interesting to the teams because of all my problems and side effects.

*OOSO Meeting
The Manor Hotel
Weston on the Green
29 June 2019*