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A cancer diagnosis during covid-19. A nurse's insider perspective

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Diagnosed with cancer during covid-19. A nurses insider perspective.

This brief account is the insider perspective of my journey as a nurse who was diagnosed with advanced cancer in February 2019. This coincided with the beginning of the global pandemic of coronavirus. This unique account is presented as an interview and reveals the challenges that being a nurse, and being health literate in the medical, diagnostic and treatment conversation brings, compared to a lay person who may not be as health literate during their own treatment journey. This was coupled with the coronavirus pandemic that brought unprecedented change to healthcare services in March 2019.

The interview begins summarising the start of my journey deep into advanced testicular cancer during Covid 19.

Interviewer: can you tell me a little bit about how it all began?

Miguel: yes. It started when I found a lump on my testicle which I knew was abnormal. I monitored it for a few weeks before seeking medical attention from my GP. My GP swiftly referred to me for an ultrasound scan which I had a few days later. At the scan, the radiographer explained that she would be on leave and would be reporting on the scan straightaway and this I was to go and see my GP in the next few days. I knew that this was likely a suggestion that she was not happy with what she'd identified on the scan. The GP did confirm a tumour and I was then referred for further tests, scans and an appointment with xxxx. This diagnostic pathway was extremely fast, although my lived experience during these few weeks was that this window of time was very protracted. It was the window of unknowing, naïveté, denial, fear and dread.

Interviewer: what happened next?

Miguel: once all the results were in, I had a further appointment that confirmed my diagnosis as advanced testicular cancer with spread to the lymphatic system. As a student nurse, I had worked on a haematology ward on several occasions during my training, working with cancer patients having chemotherapy. Therefore, had insight into what lay ahead. This insight was both a help and a hindrance. It was helpful, insofar that I could guide my family around some of the care needs that I would have during my own treatment. However, it was a hindrance insofar that I fully knew how poorly I was likely to become. This added a layer of fear to my experience, I wondered whether a layperson in their true ignorance (besides the guidance given by health care professionals) would be better placed?

Interviewer: tell me a little bit about your treatment.

Miguel:

Interviewer: tell me how covid-19 impacted on you, during your treatment?

Miguel:

Interviewer: tell me how being a nurse, with advanced cancer during covid, has changed you as a practitioner?

Miguel:

Interviewer: have you any last comments to share with your professional colleagues, on what you learnt from the experience?

Miguel:

Footnote: I would like to acknowledge the amazing care and attention that I received during my journey from the doctors, nurses and health care staff that supported me during my hardest moments.

Resources:

[Testicular cancer](#) information from the NHS website

[Cancer Research](#) Help, fundraising and research

[Chemotherapy for testicular cancer](#) Guidance from MacMillan

[Teenage Cancer Trust](#) Support and guidance for young people aged 13-24 years old