

I was diagnosed with cancer on the 23rd of November, 1991 – my 42nd birthday.

My father was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 42, only to leave my young mother and my two brothers and I behind. His body was laid to rest in London, where he had gone to be treated. The fear of my three sons going through the same things we did was what first sparked off the need to make sure somethings were done.

When I went to London for treatment, the most significant difference I noticed was in our doctor-patient relations. I had only told my doctor I had a lump in my breast before he booked me in to have it removed with local anaesthetic three days later. I had no check up, nor was I examined. And with no examination, the area to be operated on was numbed and the surgeon asked, “where was it my dear?”. I heard the blade cut the place I had pointed to.

I believed that you couldn't ask any doctor in any part of the world questions, until I saw different in the UK. The doctors enlightened me, discussed the chances of my treatment and the side effects of my medication..

As soon as I returned home after almost a year of treatment, I rolled up my sleeves to set up an association to bring the civilisation I had seen to my country and put an end to patients having to undergo treatment away from their loved ones.

With the help of my family and friends the ‘Help Those with Cancer Association’ was set up and I have since been its chairperson.

Today, I believe that spending every day working on new projects in the field of cancer has been a ray of light to me and almost four thousand other member patients.

During this 13 year period of difficulty from the government and even some doctors, the association has managed to achieve the following:

1. Annual cancer walks attended by thousands.
2. A mobile nationwide early diagnosis service. Carrying out PSA, smear tests and breast examinations in nine points of residence. This led to persuading the state to set up an early diagnosis centre. The association made financial contributions for its establishment and is still paying for the employment of a member of staff.
3. An oncology unit of 28 beds in an area of 600 square meters was opened and an agreement was made with a medical oncologist for permanent employment. A psychologist and five other personnel were also employed by the association.
4. Flight tickets, accommodation and expenses for patients and companions of those who have to be treated abroad are regularly met.
5. Various needs of cancer patients families unable to work are dealt with.
6. Education fees of child patients at school or university are provided.
7. Special bras, implants and wigs are supplied.
8. A home care service with a nurse and psychologist is under way.
9. Costs are met for visits to clinics when necessary medication and procedures are not available at the state hospital.
10. On-hand English and Greek carers/translators to deal with appointments of patients undergoing treatment in South Cyprus. All travel expenses are met.
11. Monthly seminars on cancer with local and international oncologists and experts.
12. A monthly gazette ‘Umut’ or ‘Hope’ used by many patients as a means to convey thoughts and experiences.
13. Integration and involvement of cancer patients into the workforce and activities of the association, helping them overcome the fear of ‘coming out’.

Being a cancer patient, I sometimes think about how much my life has changed. I do not have a free moment. But nothing can be as rewarding as feeling that the work I'm doing is serving the community and the people.

And i think it is to this that I owe extending my life after cancer by another 14 years.

I thank everyone who trusted and supported me.