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*A Long Road to Care*

*A lung cancer survivor living in a rural community shares his story.*

Lorne Cochrane

I lived north of Edmonton, 2 and a half hours north in a small little hamlet called Atmore and I've been basically self-retired once I got diagnosed with cancer back in 2012.

*Lorne Cochrane*

*Lung cancer survivor, Atmore, Alberta*

I went for my physical and the x-ray showed a lesion in my left lung and so that's where the whole thing started. When you don't realize, or there are no symptoms that you're sick, it hits you pretty hard.

*Tell us a little about your family history of cancer?*

I was 17 when my uncle, my grandpa's brother, first died of lung cancer, and you know, I just thought it was cancer, you know, people die from cancer. And then it was later on that my grandpa died from lung cancer, and I visited him in the hospital. And then his two daughters, healthy people, non-smokers, all their lives, very healthy people and they died in their seventies, I guess? Both of lung cancer, which really really surprised us. I realized that this was the family problem.

We all lived up north in [unintelligible], Saskatchewan, during periods of our lives, my twin brother and mum and I of course, we lived up there for 12 years and it's known for heavy radon gas.

*What financial challenges have you faced?*

The first reaction is "What's the point of going to work?", I might as well enjoy what time I've got left at home with my family, or you know, around the yard, not on some job site. So you know, it was an automatic application for early pension from my union, and they fast-tracked that, knocked my pension way down and gave it to me at the age of 52 on compassionate grounds.

Where we lived, we were fortunate that basically everything was paid for, so we just had your normal bills, we didn't have high mortgage payments, truck and car payments. So we're very fortunate for that part. But it was a struggle.

*What key supports helped you to navigate the cancer system?*

Trust me, my wife and my twin brother, they were the backbone to this whole journey. They did the research, the looking out, the looking... I just sat back and I didn't have to stress myself out trying to find all that stuff, they did all that stuff for me. And it was very difficult. My wife Mary was always online looking for answers and that's when she started advocating for-- we need resources, one-stop shop for information, for guidance, we need someone to navigate us through this journey. And again, that's where our biggest advocate, the gift of Canada, is Lung Cancer Canada. They became that cornerstone that gave us that navigation.

*What are your thoughts on the benefits of early screening?*

“Unless you’re coughing blood, we’re not spending money on a CT scan.” And that’s the feedback people get when they ask for a CT scan.

It’s hard to get it. Why should people have to go and lie to their doctors to get a low-dose CT scan? You know, give them a bunch of crap and have them go, “Oh my god, we better get you in!”. It shouldn’t be like that. And that’s stopping people from going in, and we all know that the earlier the diagnosis, the better chance you have of earlier treatments and it’ll save the healthcare system a lot of money.

*What improvements would you like to see in the future?*

What I want to see is patients to be informed more. There is no reason for patients to have to ask their oncologists, “What kind of cancer do I got?” Like why would a patient have to ask that? And then the doctor goes, “Oh you’ve got an adenocarcinoma.” “Oh, that’s lung cancer?” “Yep.” They should say “Lorne, you’ve got adenocarcinoma with a PD-L1 marker and these are the treatment options, and these don’t work, these have worked, and these are the new ones coming down the pipeline.” Too many people are being left out in the blank. In the “Uh, what did I just hear?” or talk about what I didn’t hear what I needed to hear.

*What are your current thoughts on funding for lung cancer research?*

Why is that everything else is getting their fair share of the pie, but because of the smokers or whatever people they are, you know, we’ll give you a little bit of crumbs here or there, even though you are the most dying and the most cost to the healthcare system, more money than all the cancers put together basically, you guys are on the bottom of the pole, and sucks to be you. I think it should almost be the reverse now because with breast cancer, the chances of dying of breast cancer are probably 5% versus the chance of living with lung cancer is probably 5%, you know? It’s a total opposite portion of the pie right now. But I think that the federal government and the provincial governments have a bigger part to play in saving lives.

*Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?*

All I know is that, woah! we’re making a lot of progress, with progress comes more hope. Information is power. Information drives us to goals and gets results.

*Special thanks to Lung Cancer Canada for connecting us to their patient community*

*Canadian Partnership Against Cancer*

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