

STILL STANDING with Late-Stage Lung Cancer

8 Years and Counting

by Joseph Liguori



If I've learned anything from my battle with cancer, it's that cancer can find anyone; it doesn't discriminate. But more importantly, I've learned that a frightening and bleak cancer diagnosis is not necessarily a death sentence.

My entire life was turned upside down when I was diagnosed with lung cancer eight years ago. I had enjoyed an active, healthy lifestyle. I didn't smoke. I watched what I ate. It wasn't until a physician friend of mine ex-



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pressed concern about my cough during a game of basketball that I had any reason to see a doctor. Everyone in my office had a cough, so I didn't think much of it. Still,

I took my friend's advice and visited a nearby hospital to have it checked out.

I was shocked to learn that my cough wasn't merely a symptom of a cold going around my workplace. I had stage IV lung cancer that had metastasized

to my chest and spine. What's more, I was told that the cancer had spread so far that neither surgery nor chemotherapy would help and that I should get my finances in order and go on a vacation with my family.

Instead, I decided then and there that I would do everything I could to beat this cancer. I was sure there were

more options, and I was determined to find them. My local hospital had a great reputation nationwide, but it specialized in cardiovascular care, so I decided to seek out the top cancer treatment centers this country had to offer.

I believe it is because of my perseverance in pursuing the best possible cancer care that I am still here today. I did some research, chose a cancer center, and began an aggressive treatment regimen to fight my lung cancer. In addition to the tumors in

my lung, chest, and spine, the cancer had metastasized to my brain, resulting in recurrent brain tumors for which I've received various forms of targeted chemotherapy and brain radiation, including stereotactic radiosurgery, a treatment that delivers a high dose of targeted radiation over a short time.

While my journey with cancer will never truly be over, I am thankful that advanced options for cancer treatment are available for people like me with late-stage cancer. I still make a conscious effort to live a healthy lifestyle, which includes eating nutritiously and exercising. I also stay up to date on the latest developments in the field of oncology and continue to work with

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an all-star team of doctors to manage my ongoing care. Taking these steps helps me feel more in control of my own destiny and proud knowing that I'm playing an active role in yielding my best possible chance of survival. My advice to fellow cancer survivors is this: Advocate for yourself, seek out the most advanced cancer treatments available, and most importantly, never give up hope.

Joseph Liguori is a stage IV lung cancer survivor living in AZ.

Everyone has a unique story to tell.

Send your story of cancer survival to submissions@copingmag.com, and you could be included in a future issue of *Coping*.

