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FDXHRI BDWKRURPHQ according to the American Cancer Society. This isn't about the statistic though; I would not pretend to know what SHRSOHXVXHU IURP breast cancer go through.

Instead, it is about the even larger statistic of women that will face a cancer scare in their lifetime – over 1.5 million breast biopsies are performed each year in the US, approximately 80% of which will be found to be benign. This means many of us will discover a lump or suspicious spot on their mammogram and be left terrified at some point during our lives (and still, we are the lucky ones). So here is my story.

In September 2020 life was pretty good, despite COVID going on in the world. I was turning 41 and it was time to get my first mammogram. During my normal physical in October, my doctor reminded me that it was time to schedule my mammogram. It is important for women to HWWK first mammogram at age 40 to create a baseline picture, for future diagnosis. Following my doctors' instructions, I called the radiology center to schedule my 3D Mammogram. Despite what I had heard, I wasn't nervous. I told myself that if I could give birth to a baby, I could do this. No big deal, right?

My overall mammogram appointment was smooth and fast. Since, breast cancer doesn't run in my family, there wasn't much concern. The radiologist called two days later and informed me they wanted to do another mammogram; my results from the first one "UH inconclusive". I thought, okay well this is annoying. So, three weeks later I was back at the radiologist getting another mammogram.

I went back to my normal daily life routine and didn't think much of my appointment. \$ IHZ BVODWHUP\ BFWREBDOOHG She informed me there was a suspicious area on my left breast near my lymph nodes and a breast ultrasound would be needed to get a better look. A month later, I'm back at the radiologist undergoing a breast ultrasound. Suddenly, fear and uncertainty took over.

I decided not to tell any of my friends and family XWZVRD RQEHFDXH, DV VFDUHBU PLWDNH Very negative scenario played out in my head. What about my children? My family? What if it's bad news? How did this happen? I spent the next few days researching breast cancer and early detection trying to understand what might be going on inside my body.

A few days later I received a call from my doctor regarding my ultrasound results. My doctor was uneasy about my ultrasound results but didn't believe the spot was cancer. She decided to have me repeat the ultrasound in 6 months to see if there was any change in the "area of concern". In the meantime, I decided not to think about the "what if's" and focus on the holidays and spend time with my family.



Six months later, I repeated the breast ultrasound process. Once again my doctor called with the results. The spot on my left breast had changed in size, so she referred me to a breast surgeon. I was so shocked with the news; I had to pull my car over and ask her to repeat what she said.

"Breast Surgeon?" I asked for clarification. She said "Yes, Breast Surgeon". She tried to comfort me by saying she was just being cautious, but her words didn't help. When we finally hung the phone up, I sat in my car, shaking, and cried. I cried for my family, my friends, and for any woman who had received this type of news (not just breast cancer).

I was referred to a general surgeon. It took almost 4 weeks to get an appointment. The wait was awful, I couldn't get the thought of "cancer" out of my head. I had to have blood work done, gather all my scans, and fill out pages of medical information. I've always been rather healthy; so, this was very intimidating.

When it was time for the appointment with the surgeon, my stomach was in knots. The surgeon did his exam and another ultrasound. He asked me to meet him in his office to discuss next steps.

His recommendation was "Let's wait and see if any changes occur over the next 6 months". Wait? What?? Wait to potentially let cancer spread throughout my body? He reassured me that he believed they were malignant cysts and if there was any change over the next 6 months, he would preform a biopsy.

So that brings me too today. October 2021 will be next appointment with the breast surgeon. I've become very optimistic about my breast cancer scare and have a better understanding of my doctors being cautious. I am very fortunate and blessed to be in good health and continue to focus on positive outcomes. This journey has taught me how important it is to enjoy life and not get stuck on the things not within my control. It's also helped me become more vocal on the importance of mammograms and early detection. Thanks for taking time to read my story. Please don't wait and get your mammogram. Early detection can save your life!

