

Emma's Story



I remember Stuart coming home from work one day and saying a guy from work had noticed a lump on his neck. He showed me the lump and I immediately thought why didn't I notice that? I live with him and see him every day. I told Stuart to get it checked as soon as possible.

The next day Stuart took our daughter to the doctors, so he mentioned the lump to the doctor. I asked Stuart what the doctor said, and he told me the doctor was pretty sure it was a cyst and he would be sent another appointment to have it removed or drained.

It was our daughter's 1st birthday and we went to Scarborough for the weekend with family and didn't think anything of the appointment Stuart had 4 days later, which I thought would be about draining the cyst.

The day of the appointment was a normal day, Stuart looked after April before he went to work at 2 and I went to work at 8 30, Stuart had his appointment that morning. I was at work, in the classroom of the school I work at, sat in circle time with the pupils when the office lady came in and said, "Emma, there's a phone call for you".

I immediately thought why is Stuart ringing me at work? I answered the phone and Stuart sounded like he had been crying and he just said, "Emma I need you to come home there's something I need to tell you". I felt sick and replied "What's the matter? Are you ok? Please tell me". Stuart said he would speak to me when I got home.

Our house was only a couple of minutes' walk from my work and I remember walking home I felt physically sick, I was shaking and saying out loud "please don't be cancer please don't be cancer".

When I arrived home, Stuart wasn't there so I called him; there was no answer. He eventually pulled up on the drive in his car, turned the ignition off and just sat there staring into space with April sat in her car seat at the back. I cried because I knew that he had cancer.

There were so many questions that I wanted to ask - why has this happened? Why did the doctor say it was probably a cyst

when it wasn't? Why didn't I notice the lump earlier? Is he going to die? What about April, what if she doesn't have a dad anymore?

Stuart had his thyroid removed and radioactive iodine treatment. I found it so difficult him being away from home, but I was lucky to have the support of our families, emotionally and with childcare.

I remember taking Stuart to The Christie hospital with his mum. I really didn't like being there it made it feel so "real". It made me realise I am 24 years old and my 28 year old partner has cancer, I thought you only read about these types of things they didn't really happen. Leaving Stuart at the hospital was so hard but I knew he was in the best place.

Around a year after Stuart was diagnosed, a letter arrived from the hospital, Stuart was at work, but he told me to open it. It was the best news ever- he had the all clear! It was an absolutely amazing and emotionally draining feeling for us all.

Looking back at this now it doesn't seem like a big deal but throughout the process of it all it made me feel like my life was falling apart I really did think Stuart might die.

Stuart was so angry, I really disliked him at times although I knew it wasn't his fault, but I was getting the blame for everything. I remember getting to a point and saying, "You need to go to counselling I can't do this anymore," and was so glad when he did; and it made a difference.

I am so thankful for all the support we received as a family from the GP, doctors, nurses, consultant, councillors and family. It has definitely put life into perspective and has made us such a strong couple. I'm so proud of Stuart the way he has dealt with everything and I couldn't ask for a better husband or father to my children.



The Swallows

Head & Neck Cancer Support Group
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