

Social Work

A Patient's Perspective

As I watched the nurse put the IV in my arm, I was still in total disbelief. I thought to myself, I'm only 39 years old. How did this happen to me? The nurse was chatting about the chemotherapy, pre-medications and various side effects including hair loss. She was very nice, but I just kept thinking, "how am I going to deal with this?"

I was still working full-time and managing our lives and caring for our two children. How would they react to my hair loss? Am I going to get fired for taking time off? How are we going to manage financially? How am I going to get through this? As all these things were swirling around in my head, it seemed, on cue, that the social worker introduced herself to me and asked if she could sit down.

She asked me how I was doing and it seemed that was all it took. I told her everything that was on my mind, including my children, my job and our financial future. She let me go on and on and listened intently. After I was finished, she asked how I was doing, and honestly, at that point, I really didn't know.

We talked for about an hour and she explained to me all of the support and services they offer at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center. I could get help with my children, help for myself and help with our finances and my job. It seemed too good to be true, but it wasn't. That day was the first of many more conversations I had with my social worker.

I am here today for my last chemotherapy treatment. After my appointment, my husband and I are celebrating with the kids—ice cream sundaes!

For more information about Social Work services, please contact Dana DeDonato, MSW, LSW at 215.829.6379 or visit PennMedicine.org/Karnell.