



2019 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

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Cancer From A Child's Eyes

A while ago my grandfather, who I call Poppop suffered from cancer. I became aware of the situation in the year 2016. Yet, I will start from the beginning of what happened, and how it impacted not only my Poppop, but my mother, father, aunts, cousin, and especially my Geegee (grandmother). Not only were the people that I love dearly impacted by this event, I was as well.

In the year 2013, my Poppop was diagnosed with “Stage Three Kidney Cancer” when I was younger. My family gathered around the table in my grandparent’s house, and my Poppop explained the symptoms of the kidney cancer, the statistics, and what the doctors had to do to get rid of the cancer. The interesting part about this whole thing is while everyone was scared that it might be my grandfather’s time to leave the earth or something bad could happen to him, my Poppop who was sick stayed calm, cool, and collected. He said, “I will do whatever it takes to keep myself alive.” It’s amazing how someone can stay calm and not be scared about having a serious illness that could damage them forever. My Poppop has a lot of faith!

Continuing the story, Poppop was sent to “Fox Chase Cancer Center” and the functioning kidney with the cancer was removed, leaving the kidney that wasn’t functioning behind. This caused him to have to go to dialysis three times a week for the rest of his life. Later in 2016, I became aware of my grandfather’s condition and I learned that even though in 2013 the doctors took out the kidney with cancer, the cancer returned aggressively. In my opinion, the years 2016 and 2017 is when my Poppop’s struggles began. My grandmother, aunts, and mom were going

back and in forth to the hospital. This cycle went on for a while with a few surgeries and major events. The thing that makes me so emotional is that after Poppop's major surgery to remove cancer again, there were complications after the surgery. For that reason, he got another surgery less than two weeks from the first one. Shortly after, he went to a rehabilitation center to recover.

Although my Poppop was experiencing challenges, it made me very happy and emotional that my Poppop still made it to my tenth birthday party! That's how much love my Poppop has for me, for this reason, it's so difficult to think about losing him. My Poppop shared the doctors told him that it would be a seventy percent chance the cancer will return and guess what, it did. At first the doctors prescribed a chemo pill, but it caused internal bleeding. Secondly, the doctors recommended immune therapy and they gave my grandfather a drug that is used for patients with skin cancer called OPDIVO. My Poppop had to get treatment using IV twice a month and the tumor shrunk. To sum up the story, my Poppop is surviving Stage Three Kidney Cancer.

I, as a child, could easily be assumed not to understand what is going on in the world, but that is certainly false. Children are conscious of what is going on around them and are affected by cancer as well. My grandfather being sick for a while affected my stress level, yet my mom reminded me that when we visited him at Fox Chase Cancer Center to keep smiling, keep praying for him, and keep the faith. It was hard seeing the person that is always happy with a great personality, sick in a hospital bed. Yet, no matter how tired my Poppop seemed or if the nurse was giving him shots, he always managed a smile and even laughed. I believe my grandfather remaining in a good mood, having a lot of faith in God, and cooperating with the doctors, nurses, and other staff members at the hospital helped calm my family's nerves. He is the best patient I have ever seen!

I'm glad that I shared my Poppop's story and I opened my feelings about my Poppop's diagnosis, struggles, and victories. Although the cancer tumor has shrunk, my Poppop still takes OPDIVO, which works on twenty-five percent of patients without skin cancer. Poppop is blessed to be part of the twenty-five percent and I thank God for it. Poppop takes the medication once a month to help him stay alive. My Poppop and I's prayers were answered!