



Gearing Up to Battle Rare Forms of Cancer

By Jennifer Goodman Linn

Jen is a marketing executive and fitness enthusiast who lives in Manhattan. After undergoing treatment for sarcoma, she and her husband, Dave, created Cycle for Survival, an indoor team-cycling fundraiser.

In December 2004, I was diagnosed with a rare form of soft tissue cancer called sarcoma. It came as a complete shock — how could a healthy 33-year-old possibly have cancer? Well, the sad truth is cancer doesn't discriminate...and it chose me. Over the past five years I have fought four battles with this disease, consisting of four major surgeries and over 26 months of chemotherapy. As of my latest surgery, in May 2009, I am currently considered cancer-free. I live my life as if cancer is behind me for good, but my husband and I are

well aware that the odds of the cancer returning are quite high.

Early in my diagnosis, a friend told me, "One day you'll look back and think cancer is the best thing that ever happened to you." At the time I thought he was crazy. How could a disabling disease be a good thing? But he taught me that I had a choice — I could accept defeat and let cancer get the better of me OR I could use this disease to help find my true purpose and create a better life for myself and others.

Even during my chemotherapy treatments, I somehow found the strength to exercise. I typically focused on indoor spinning/cycling because I could easily control the workout intensity based on how I was feeling. I often say that I credit my physical recovery to MSKCC and my emotional recovery to exercise.

While I was going through treatment, I vowed that if I was lucky enough to beat cancer, I would give back to the doctors and nurses at MSKCC who save the lives of thousands every day. I

decided to couple my passion for exercise with my passion for helping others and developed Cycle for Survival (www.cycleforsurvival.org), an all-day indoor cycling relay that raises money for rare cancer research at MSKCC.

Rare, or "orphan," cancers refer to the hundreds of different types of cancers that affect millions of people, but don't get the attention or funding they desperately need.

Patients with orphan cancers have fewer therapeutic options because funding lags behind support for more common

cancers. However, research on orphan cancers is absolutely critical, both to help current patients and also because many doctors believe that orphan cancer research may yield keys to the treatment of all cancer types.

I started Cycle for Survival as a grassroots effort, but it has blossomed into something very special. In three short years, we've raised more than \$2 million! We've seen first-hand that we can make a difference because the money raised goes directly into research studies that have already resulted in better treatment regimens for many patients. I know that whatever challenges life throws at me, I will be there wearing my "Jen: 4, Cancer: 0" shirt with pride!

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