

Never say never

[Ō·v ār'i-an] Cancer Patient

A second opinion...



Never say never, because you never know when, if, or how you'll fight. But what I do know is I am willing to take on my cancer with all my might. It has been seven years since I was diagnosed with stage IV ovarian cancer and I am "well seasoned." I have learned to integrate my cancer and its treatments into my life. I have a personal relationship with it and I know I am the boss. I live everyday and cherish the joys and the abundance of love from my husband John, my parents Melva and Dick, my adoring children Tom, Tatum, and Jack, and of all my friends. People tell me I look great, I feel empowered, I take kick boxing classes weekly, I go on weekend trips with the girls, and I know and accept that what will be, will be. I will never say never.

by Tori Busch

A Second Opinion

"Sometimes it takes a new and fresh look at a cancer patient to determine a new approach, define an alternative path, or uncover a new finding that can make a difference," says Dr. Tchekmedyian. "Twenty-five years of experience have taught me to keep an open mind, to not take anything for granted, and to be meticulous and methodical in pursuing all avenues available. It also helps to have 11 associates with whom I meet regularly and colleagues around the country with whom I consult very often."

Dr. Tchekmedyian first saw Mrs. Busch at her husband's request. She had had multiple treatments for advanced ovarian cancer over several years, and now the cancer had spread to the lungs and around the heart; she was quite ill and had undergone several procedures. Her lungs were filling up with fluid; she was short of breath and the outlook was not hopeful. Time was running out, and she had accepted that her disease was terminal.



Tori and Family



"A careful review and additional testing on her cancer cells, however, revealed new findings that allowed us to add new non-chemotherapy treatments," says Dr. Tchekmedyian. Awareness of these findings also alerted the patient to discontinue medications that could actually contribute to the cancer's growth. As a consequence, her condition stabilized.

"A year and a half have passed and she remains active. Her mental and physical resilience, her pragmatism, her adherence to a plan of action, and her pursuit of physical fitness have all been very helpful," says Dr. Tchekmedyian. Studies suggest that being physically strong and fit helps fight cancer.

"We discussed that the fight she has with her cancer is like a boxing match. She has fought some rounds, but she has more rounds to go. She has to remain



Tori Busch

on her feet and be able to take some punches. She really took the advice to heart and before I knew it, she was kick boxing!"

"Her stability is very tenuous, and her condition can change and deteriorate very quickly; but we take comfort in the fact that everything possible is being done to control her disease. She enjoys her life and is able to work. She is definitely a good negotiator; we have had significant exchanges before amicably settling on the intensity and duration of some of her treatments! But regardless of what the future has in store for her, we will stand by her; and my hat is off to her for her strength and courage, for her grace, for her sense of humor, and for her rare and endearing ability to be rebellious and accepting at the same time."

Facts about ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer is relatively infrequent, but carries a serious prognosis. It is expected to affect 22,000 women and cause 16,000 deaths in the United States this year. It is most frequent after age 50, but can happen earlier. The cause is unknown, but a family history of breast or ovarian cancer increases the risk.

Ovarian cancer may produce few or no symptoms because the ovaries can grow to a size of about five inches before causing discomfort. National studies are looking at means of early diagnosis through physical examination, a blood test called CA-125, and pelvic ultrasound. Women should not ignore abdominal bloating or pain, pelvic pressure, or bowel function changes. Treatment generally requires extensive surgery to remove the cancer, and chemotherapy. New therapies specifically attack the cancer cells or block the blood vessels that feed them.