



## JACKY'S STORY

*My name is Jacqueline Kitchen, I am 69 years old. My family consists of my husband Rod, my children Martin and Nicola, and my three grandchildren: Josh, Finn and Billie. Over the years we have lived in several cities, both in the UK and Australia, and we have finally settled in Sydney. I belong to a Ladies Friendship Group, which involves monthly lunch meetings, mahjong, bridge, scrabble, outings, dine outs, and book groups.*

I was diagnosed with kidney cancer in May 2017. My initial symptom was back pain, which wasn't causing me too much pain, but became uncomfortable when sitting down so I decided to see the doctor. I was not expecting too much to be wrong. My diagnosis was very quick. My GP sent me for an MRI scan. I was called in the next day where he informed me that I had stage 4 Kidney Cancer. He made me an appointment with the urologist for the next day. I had several more scans, after which I had my left kidney removed, within 2 weeks of diagnosis.

There was nothing missing from the diagnosis experience—it was quick and everyone was kind and considerate.

When I was first diagnosed, I was shocked; I felt like I had been given a death sentence, because stage 4 sounds like the end, with no coming back. I told my family straight away and they were very supportive, but I did not tell anyone else for a few weeks. I had to come to terms with it myself, which took me a while.

Initially my life did change for sure—everything stopped for a while. But gradually when I got over the operation and I got used to the treatment, everyday life got back to normal. I am a positive person so I look on the bright side. I'm still here and hope to be for a long while yet!

I see my oncologist every 6 to 8 weeks and we get on very well. He is interested in how I'm coping and what he can do to help. He keeps me informed on the impact of the medication on the cancer, and how kidney cancer treatment is generally improving all the time. He is very supportive. I've been on the current treatment, which comes as a tablet, for about 4 years. At the beginning I would manage my life around my treatment, which was not always easy. I would organise my social life around my week off the tablets so that I am feeling my best. This was not always possible to do but I did not stop me from enjoying life.

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I eat a balanced diet, but I have always done so anyway, so not much has changed there. I used to play golf, go to the gym, and enjoy long walks. I stopped playing golf, but I still walk the dog, which keeps me fit.

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*My diagnosis and treatment are now just part of my life. Initially the cancer diagnosis was devastating but now it is just part of my life and my family's. I don't let it bother me; I am just getting on with things.*

Some of the tips I would give to someone else in a similar situation are to have faith in your oncologist: mine gave me hope after my initial consultation. Be honest and let others know how you are feeling and what they can do to help you. There will always be good days and low days, and that's ok.

I had no control in getting this cancer but I have some control in how I cope with it. When I was first diagnosed, it was all a whirlwind and my life was turned upside down. I now put myself first. I don't worry about things that are not important which I have no control over. I just get on with life.

Also, your support system is really important. I have a good support system around me: my husband, my family, my oncologist and a close friend.

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