

Prolonging the dance with Mr D.

Of course, there is a price to pay for prolonging the dance with Mr D. I was intensely aware of this in the days after last week's CT scan as I debated whether I was willing to continue with more chemotherapy. Not expecting such a favourable CT scan result had led me to swing towards contemplating giving up on the chemotherapy.

There are the weekly blood tests, the fortnightly appointments with the oncologist, and every second Thursday spent in the day stay oncology ward. Then there are the side effects of the chemotherapy. Three more months of not enjoying food due to the loss of taste, the chemical taste in my mouth, the days when the grumbling stomach and lower abdominal pains after eating are difficult to deal with, and various other gastrointestinal pains – this is a big price to pay in my world. Then there is the feeling that my whole body has become quite alien to me.

I had two questions on my list this week, the answers to which pushed me firmly into agreeing to more chemotherapy. The first was with the information Dr S. now had about my tolerance of chemotherapy and the results of the CT scan, what was his estimate of my life expectancy if I chose not to have any more. He reply was 4 -5 months, maybe 6 months. The second question was what was his estimate of my life expectancy if I chose to continue and have another six sessions. His reply was about a year. So I opted to pay the price and continue.

Yesterday I had the seventh chemotherapy session, but managed to get them to hurry all the stuff that gets shoved through my IV line (no delays between them) so my son could pick me up at 3pm instead of 4pm. I asked for this first thing in the morning, having no idea of what was about to unfold in the

room I was in a couple of hours later.

For the second time I witnessed what happens when a patient has a bad reaction to the chemotherapy drug(s). Only this time the woman was next to me with only an empty chair between us. It was a very scary thing, as the room filled with doctors and nurses, a screen was put around the woman, conversations are overheard (there is no privacy possible in the oncology day stay ward), me and the others in the room are temporarily relocated to another room, and the patient was eventually removed. Then we returned and the day carried on as if nothing has happened. No general words of reassurance for the rest of us. Fortunately, a friend had arrived just before this happened and her presence was very comforting as the drama unfolded.

Surely I am not the only one wondering what happened to the patient, whether this could happen to any of us, and what the consequences are. I find this completely unacceptable. These scenarios were not mentioned in the Cancer Society's chemotherapy session that my eldest son and I attended. They should be, as it is not just preparing us for the possibility that this could happen to us, but also for dealing with the drama of having this unfold right in front of us.

