

September 2020



Hi! I'm Pam.

I. Had. Cancer.

And so began my cancer journey.

November 2018. I was shocked to receive the news that I had *invasive ductal carcinoma* – Stage 1 – with a 2 cm tumour in my right breast.

Like all women who turn 50, I'd received a letter from the Ontario Breast Screening Program. It was time to get a mammogram. I debated. Do I even bother?

I had no family history of breast cancer, although I did have a lump on my left breast in 2004, following the birth of my daughter. Dr. Darbyshire did a biopsy, and Dr. Chande removed the benign lump. Nothing to worry about. *So I didn't.*

It wasn't much of an inconvenience to go to WDMH, and wouldn't take too much of my time, so I made the appointment.

I'm extremely glad that I did!

I had the most common type of breast cancer; although it can spread to the lymph nodes and other parts of the body, it tends to move slowly, and surgery is usually successful.

Dear Friend,

It's been an interesting year so far! I hope that you and your loved ones have been staying healthy and safe throughout this pandemic. Physical distancing, curbside pick-ups, self-isolation, and masks are the new normal for all of us. But WDMH staff continue to work, ensuring care is provided to patients like me.

My name is Pam. I've lived most of my life in South Dundas. I'd taken the "close to home" care and services of WDMH for granted for both my family and myself. Thankfully, I hadn't needed to use many of the services over the years. Until recently.

My first mammogram, in May 2018, showed what looked like a benign lesion. So I also had an ultrasound, and was asked to return to be rechecked in October. I did, assuming that nothing had changed...but that was not the case. Within a week, I was at the Ottawa General Hospital having a biopsy. Then an appointment with Dr. Oberoi – and the news – I had breast cancer. Two weeks later, I had a lumpectomy, where along with the cancer, three lymph nodes were removed and sent for testing. Thankfully, the cancer had not spread!

My type of cancer is usually too small to be felt in a breast exam – and is found only because of a mammogram. I am so grateful that WDMH has the tools and technology available to detect early breast cancer. **It is only because I had access to this testing close to home, that I was diagnosed early.** I want to help ensure that these tests continue to be available to people in our community well into the future – and I hope you do too!

The current mammography machine is now over 10 years old, and will need to be replaced within the next two years. Although it still works very well, part of our commitment to care means being proactive – taking action to replace equipment before it breaks. **Raising the funds needed is a priority. This is a BIG project, and we can't do it without your help.**

Approximately 5,200 mammograms (including around 35 tests on men) are done each year, right here at WDMH. Your gift will help many people.

It is not the most comfortable of tests, but certainly is an important one to have. The images created during the test show detailed views from various angles, allowing the radiologist to see all areas of the tissue, and to identify any potential issues. Having regular mammograms can not only reassure patients if there is nothing wrong, but *they can also provide early detection of breast cancer – which is so important.*

Early detection may mean less treatment, and a quicker recovery time – as well as a better chance of survival – making such a difference to the life of a breast cancer patient.

Replacing this equipment will cost about \$570,000 – about \$110 per test. That's a lot of money. But, to me, and to others – whether diagnosed with breast cancer or not – this equipment is priceless. So far, over \$230,000 has been raised – but we have a long way to go, and we need your help!

Did you know that the Ontario government does not pay for medical equipment in our hospitals? Equipment WDMH needs to take care of patients like me! It is only because of an amazing group of passionate people in our community, and many wonderful donors, that the option to have mammograms locally is available.

Maybe you or someone you love has had a mammogram here – or will need one in the future. Your donation can help ensure that continues.

Advances in technology improve test accuracy. Better accuracy improves cancer detection rates, and reduces the need for additional testing. Newer designs make it more comfortable for patients, and for staff.

Just imagine the difference you can make!

I can't say enough about the amazing care I received at WDMH – from the technologists, surgical staff, and the various doctors. They were all very caring and thorough, and ensured that things moved quickly as soon as they noticed something was wrong. I was so impressed by everyone I met during this journey.

I am very grateful to have WDMH in my community – and I'm sure you are too!

Please give as generously as you can - with a one-time gift, or a long-term commitment with a monthly gift.

I will need to continue regular screening, including mammograms every year. *The chance of breast cancer recurring is greatest in the first five years – so it's very important to me that WDMH has this equipment available for my follow-up tests.* The ability to have these tests at our local hospital – in a familiar place, close to home – is comforting when you are going through this journey.

Raising the necessary funds to purchase a new mammography machine is vital. It must be replaced in the next couple of years – and your support is crucial to making this happen. Remember – approximately 5,200 mammograms are done every year at WDMH on both women and men – and some of those tests will save a life.

Thanks to previous donors and community fundraisers, the current machine has served our community well – now you can help to make sure that continues. You and your gift will help many more people in our community – whether reassurance that all is well, or with a diagnosis so they can get the treatment they need.

With your help, we can give the caring staff of WDMH the new equipment they need to help care for patients like me – and our family, friends, and community.



Sincerely,

Pam (Whitteker) Rodrigue

WDMH Baby/Mom/Patient/Donor – and Grateful Breast Cancer Survivor

P.S. Remember – a screening mammogram is often the only way to find a cancer like mine early. Please give as generously as you can.

P.P.S. We understand that these are unusual times for everyone. We are grateful for the support of our community, and hope you can help us too. As we move towards a new normal, services at WDMH, like mammograms, have started to resume. And the need for replacing equipment at WDMH continues.

We know that many are looking to help others however they can. **Your gift will make a difference.**

