



Speaking from Experience *Bowel Cancer*

Transcript for chapter 4 of 10: Treatment & surgery

Caroline - Take time to spend with yourself. You're going to need it, psychologically. And I kept hearing that, first from the specialist and then the surgeon. And I thought, "No, no, no. Between now and the operation I can go to work at least three or four days." And they said, "No."

Paul - I remember being very reassured by the surgeon who treated me and carried out the operation. He went into great detail and communicated very well with me just what the diagnosis was, what he proposed to do, and the chances of success, which he rated at very highly. So he was very positive and that sort of flowed over onto myself.

Caroline - They were really very, very important days, to come to terms with the diagnosis, to spend time with my loved ones - my parents, with my sister. I did really pleasant things every single day.

Peter - They operated on the Tuesday, and they cut out the section where the blockage was. And it was perfect. I came out of there after a week with a temp colostomy.

John and Joy - "It is so early," he said, "it hasn't even gone into the muscle of the bowel. But unfortunately, it's too far down for me to take it out and stitch the bowel back up again. It's too far down and I haven't got enough to play with." And he said, "So we're going to do a colostomy."

Dennis - Fortunately, the bowel cancer was higher up in the major part of the bowel. So when they take that section of the bowel away, there's something to hook the other bit of the bowel to.

Les - The operation took about three and three quarter hours. And when I came out of it, the surgeon came to me and saw me and said, "Well, Les, yes it had broken through the wall. We've had to take some pathology tests. We've had to have a look at your liver, everything else, the lymph nodes and so forth, and see whether it has affected those. And he said, "Well, in four days, on the coming Monday, I'll come in and let you know the result of those, and whether or not it has spread." Those four days, to me, were like forty days and forty nights.

Caroline - Then the tumour was taken for testing in pathology and then two weeks later he came to me at about 9:15 at night and said, "I've got good news for you. It was caught at a very early stage and it's all out and that's it."

Les - The next thing that happened, it was the Sunday morning and the surgeon came in to see me. And I said, "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be here on Monday?" He was just seeing some other... He said, "Les, I've rang. I've got a verbal that things are alright." I said, "Oh, that's good. So that means I'll have some chemo and so forth..." And he said, "No Les. We got it all. You were very lucky."



Debra - The first four days was really a complete haze because you're kept very comfortable with analgesic.

Paul - If I look back and analyse why my treatment was so successful, I guess the key would be the early diagnosis and the skill of the surgeon in being able to take the tumour out and then allow me to get on with a normal life.

Caroline - The operation was a success and my wound healed. I had a few days of regression where the bowel wasn't sort of doing the things it needed to do. When I had my first, what you would consider a normal bowel movement, I felt very much like a little two year old.

Dennis - I felt a big down. On about the fourth day I felt really, really sick. And I didn't want to take calls or anything. I really felt like I was going to die and I didn't know what was wrong with me and neither did the staff. But apparently there was internal haemorrhaging and there was blood congealing in the stomach and it was going all black and horrible. And that really made me feel ill. And then they poked a tube up my nose and down to my stomach and they drained it. So when I came out of that on about the fifth day, I really felt like I had ten lives. I felt terrific. So, about fifteen days in hospital, which is a pretty long time. Lost a stone, when I came out. But it was alright after that.

Peter - When they reversed the first bowel, when they put it back into the tummy, and I started to eat a couple of days after, I must've had some wind and it sort of bent, and it got a kink in it. And it wouldn't pass wind, food, anything whatsoever. So I had to be operated on again. But after that I came out and there was no treatment, no nothing. I just got to go home.

Les - I was in the hospital for thirteen days and told to go home. And the surgeon said that he should be able to reverse that bag within eight weeks. Well that was... exactly what happened. I went back there and I was able to take the... In the meantime I got rid of the catheter because the nerves came back and they said, "Yep, you can have a pee properly." Which was great. The reversal was very good - a little bit painful, but you didn't care one bit about that, you just wanted to get rid of that bag.

Peter - Then two years after they found that I had another little speck, which was a little bit lower. And they had to sort of take everything away. They had to take the anus away, because it was so low down they have to leave five centimetres either side of wherever it was, and it was so minute.