



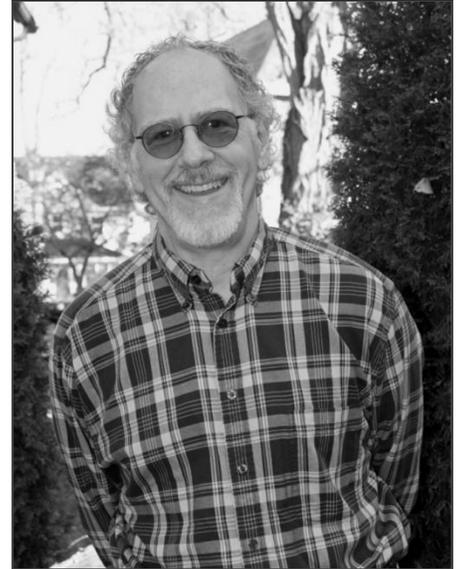
November 2015

Dear friends of Cancer Connection,

“Cancer is something that happens to other people.” Most of us have thought that sometime in our lives. I imagine most of us who have lived with cancer, either in ourselves or in a loved one, have the same feeling of shock when the diagnosis hits closer to home.

I was a month into recovering from surgery after the removal of a non-cancerous brain tumor when I was told that I also had a rare form of leukemia. "We can't cure it" was the bad news; "but we've had good luck putting it into remission" was the good news. I was launched into three grueling months of chemotherapy.

Many friends and family members in the know kept suggesting that I check out Cancer Connection. "Call them. They even have a men's support group", they would tell me. I'm not the type who typically joins groups. But after enough prodding, and enough time feeling alone in this dance with cancer, and feeling isolated from people whom I could really talk to, and who could understand the feelings that only someone with cancer knows, I called.



What I found were people who did indeed understand. And wanted to hear me. And shared my fears and small triumphs. And could share their own experiences with me, lessening my feeling that this was a solo flight. Suddenly I wasn't alone on the dance floor anymore.

My mainstay during the past several years has been the Men Living with Cancer Support Group. Once a week we meet to share our stories and, yes, support each other. Some of us who have been attending the group for years have become like a band of brothers. Newcomers are welcomed into this band like long-lost relatives and all given the opportunity to tell their story to ears that understand and want to hear and to be there. For most men, this isn't an easy environment to find — a place where guys can open up and talk about hopes and fears; can ask for help; and can find a safe haven from the outside world that keeps going on regardless of what's happening in their lives.

Unlike myself, some men come to the group as soon as they get the diagnosis. They've heard about Cancer Connection from a friend, a relative, or even their doctor. They come in scared and confused, having had too much information and sometimes a multiple of options thrown at them before they've even absorbed the initial shock from the news. While the Men's Group is careful not to ever give advice (except for strongly suggesting getting a second medical opinion), sharing our experiences in the medical vortex of cancer care truly helps newcomers

CANCER CONNECTION ~ 41 Locust Street, Northampton, MA 01060 ~ (413) 586-1642
www.cancer-connection.org ~ info@cancer-connection.org



understand their choices better and can make the process a little less scary and intimidating. Learning about others' experiences, good, bad, or indifferent, can take off layers of anxiety and allow for better, more informed choice making.

A cancer diagnosis affects the whole family. Often it's harder on the caregivers than on the patient herself. Cancer Connection understands this and offers free services to the caregivers as well, ranging from a Caregivers and Families Support Group to integrative therapies, creative classes, and exercise programs.

I have been impressed by the positive changes in those of us suffering from the side effects of cancer and cancer treatment who have experienced these therapies. Stress, anxiety, nausea, fatigue, and peripheral neuropathy are just a few of those side effects. A massage, a Reiki session, acupuncture, reflexology, or learning meditation can help. Activities such as learning to row a boat or painting, aqua aerobics or yoga can help re-develop motor skills and bring back muscle development and eye-hand coordination lost over a course of cancer treatment. Cancer Connection offers these options and more for free to help those living with the disease and their caregivers.

Unfortunately, cancer is knocking on too many of our own doors these days. That's when knocking on the door of the Cancer Connection becomes so important. Cancer Connection is indeed a haven for those living with cancer, whether in their own body or in the body of someone they love.

I am writing this letter to ask for your financial support of Cancer Connection so that it will continue to be able to open its doors and services free of charge to our families, friends, and neighbors if that diagnosis shows up on an unexpected doorstep close to home.

Please join me in supporting Cancer Connection with a tax-deductible donation so that it can continue to strengthen lives in our community for our community.

Thanking you in anticipation of your generosity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Howard Polonsky