

Patient and Family Advisor Spotlight: Lucille Partington

Article by Lucille Partington, SCN Patient and Family Advisor

After eight years of teaching in my small town of Sexsmith, without a single sick day, I phoned in sick and went to the hospital in Grande Prairie. I was constantly vomiting and there was fluid in one of my lungs - which the medical team removed with a needle in my back - up to one litre of fluid at a time! But the fluid kept coming back and soon was in both lungs. After four months I was diagnosed with a tropical disease that they think I got from living in Africa many years earlier.

My whole family had to move from Sexsmith to Grande Prairie so that they could be near me while I was receiving the medical care I needed. My husband had to find a new job in Grande Prairie so he could care for me, and my four teenage children all had to move schools from Sexsmith to Grande Prairie. I quickly realized that all of them were living my life instead of their own. With the help of a wheelchair, I was able to leave hospital to attend my eldest son's graduation.

The following week, after nine months in the hospital, I received devastating news: my doctors told me that my struggle for survival was at an end and that I would certainly not live to see Christmas.

It was then that I had a wide awakening about how I wanted to continue living my life for me and my family. My Christian faith has always been an important and central part of my life so I reached out to my church and network for positive thoughts and prayers. My church organized a healing service for me. It meant so much to me that all four of the specialists who made up my medical team belonged to my church and they all participated in the church services dedicated to my healing. My healthcare team was amazing and their tireless work to treat me and to support me inspired me to keep fighting to stay alive. I have such an appreciation for how important faith can be as part of one's healing.

Over time, I began to improve steadily and we were able to move back to Sexsmith.

Though I wasn't back to 100% and unable to go back to work, I was very much alive. I believe that having a positive attitude, a strong faith and complete trust in my medical team was so good for me. This is how I still live every day.



Photo courtesy of Lucille Partington



Because of this experience, I have a second chance at life. I have participated in huge sustainable water and forestry projects to help preserve the earth, our common home, and to reduce environmental problems that seriously affect people's health. I have had the opportunity to travel to many countries around the world to teach others about this as well. I spend a lot of time with my grandchildren and I volunteer with our great healthcare system as a patient advisor with the Primary Health Care Integration Network and as a member of the Peace Health Advisory Council.

Repaying the health system for the great people who kept me going is a small gift for the great treatment I received. I encourage everyone to consider volunteering – it is good for your health, mind and soul.