

Yolanda: Shared Decision Making during Cancer Treatment

Yolanda: “My name is Yolanda Beaton. I am a professor of special education at one of the local colleges. I'm also a assistant principal here in Brooklyn at a special needs school. Teaching and education is not only my profession, it's also my passion. And knowing that education can propel you in life, it's something that I've always taught my students, but I also want to be a living example of it.”

“I'm a researcher just by design. I'm one of those people, I got to know what's happening. I'm just not going to hand everything over to you, I have to know exactly what's going on. And I wanted to be part of the decision-making when it came to my treatment, because nobody else could be there for me.”

“I was diagnosed with stage 4 mantle cell lymphoma, which is a pretty rare type of lymphoma. I started my first treatment on January 28th of 2021, and I did three rounds of chemo. I was scheduled to do four rounds of chemo, but my liver could not take the fourth round, and so they decided to stop treatment. They asked me, “What do you want to do? Do you want to have a stem cell transplant? Or do you want to do two years of rituximab?” - which is immunotherapy.”

“For me, being able to share in the decision-making of my treatment was very important. I wanted to be an active participant, and I wanted to know exactly what was happening with me. So I wanted to partner with my doctors to make my decision. And one of the best ways for me to be able to do that was to arm myself with information. It was something I was very comfortable doing. My research, when I know a lot about something, it helped me become an expert in it, in a sense. It made me more aware, made me more comfortable, so I was able to just take in a lot more and be able to advocate for myself more.”

“And so I chose the two years of rituximab, and I completed my last treatment June of 2023.”

“I started making these videos to chronicle my journey, especially my treatment journey.”

[‘All I want is to feel like I got energy again. That's it. Because one minute I'm good, and the next minute I'm just like, “Ugh.”’]

“I had started a Instagram page where I want to connect more with people that was diagnosed with cancer or blood cancer, and sharing my videos just to show them that, hey, I'm going through this. You may be going through this too. We can link up. We can talk. Talk about my treatment, your treatment. Just to help people through along the way.”

[‘So I'm getting wrapped up with my Coban. See all these new terminologies? I got Coban. And so how are we going to do the vein check?’]

“And it really did help me because I've made a lot of friends and we talk about things, how you're feeling today, how's your treatment? That type of stuff.”

[‘Going into my last treatment, I'm extremely excited, and I hope that you all having a great and productive and also a blessed day.’]

“So just making these videos help me, and they clearly help other people too.”

[‘Everyone, not only cancer patients, but everyone needs a doctor that is going to listen to them. You explain what's happening, they listen.’]

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Emmanuel: “Yolanda is a strong advocate, very knowledgeable individual. She has a lot to give, a lot of information and knowledge to share.”

Yolanda: “Manny and Erica are the true definition of friendship, love, and just real family. They gave me a safe place to heal, a safe place to be upset, a safe place to cry, as you can see.”

Emmanuel: “We provided her shared empathy. So with that, we started looking at trying to become more knowledgeable about the condition.”

Yolanda: “That's one thing that I love about Manny and Erica, is that collectively they did research. So while I was doing research, they were doing research to help me be able to advocate for myself.”

Emmanuel: “It is definitely important to have that autonomy, to be able to be great participants in their own healthcare decisions, and that's what Yolanda did.”

Yolanda: [‘So I just got some really good news. I don't want to put you on the camera, so you just say it right from there.’]

Speaker 3 (healthcare worker): [‘So no cancer on these scans.’]

Yolanda: [‘They look great?’]

Speaker 3 (healthcare worker): [‘They look great.’]

Yolanda: [‘Awesome.’]

Speaker 3 (healthcare worker): [‘Yeah.’]

Yolanda: “When I look back on my videos, now they represent resilience to me. These videos help me to see the journey that I've been through, and I came out more resilient.”

[‘So even though I'm having treatment, it's cool.’]

“I'm extremely excited about just continuing my path and my journey, while also teaching people how to advocate for themselves and volunteering just to raise awareness about blood cancer. I am ferocious about not wasting a single moment that has been given to me.”