

# David: Dealing with the Physical and Emotional Toll of Cancer Treatment

David: "I live in New Jersey in a 55 plus community. My wife and I moved here in April of 2021. At that time, I was quite healthy, very active, so we thought this was a perfect place to be. About two months into our move, I found out that there was a problem, that my PSA was high. PSA is an indicator for prostate cancer. 70% of the prostate was infiltrated, so the only choice was to do the surgery."

Debbie: "It took me a while for it to sink in that that was what they really were saying. That Dave seemed very healthy and didn't have any symptoms, and we went from that to we're going to have major surgery."

David: "After the removal of the prostate fully, and because of the 70% infiltration, they also removed 16 lymph nodes just to make sure that the cancer hadn't spread. When you have your prostate removed, they still monitor your PSA levels. The PSA went up three times, and then they took the PSA again within two months, and it had more than doubled again. I saw the medical oncologist and he explained that he was going to start me on a medication called Lupron, which is a hormonal treatment for prostate cancer patients."

"I started the Lupron first, then went for the radiation therapy, which was eight weeks of radiation therapy, five days a week, and that was a whole journey in itself because it is pretty hard to do this for eight weeks straight without missing a beat.

"About eight weeks into the treatment, I was away in Seattle visiting my granddaughter. In the middle of the day this horrible pain shut down my leg. They diagnosed it as sciatica, but it actually was because I had bulging discs in my spine as most likely a result of radiation treatment."

"Because I was going in and out of the city, money did become a factor. You had to spend money just to go to your treatment facility. You had to park a car. You had to eat lunch. The cost would've been phenomenal if I had to stay in a hotel and had to eat out every night. One of my fraternity brothers, as I call them, at the radiology group, said to me, "Oh, thank God for Hope Lodge." And I looked at him and I said, "Hope Lodge. What is that?" He explained to me, Hope Lodge is for people who have long commutes to get to their treatment."

"It was literally blocks away from where I was going from my treatment, and it saved my life because I had to pay the fee for a hotel it would've really been impossible."

Debbie: "I'm angry about the finance part. Thankful for Hope Lodge, but angry that we live in a world so tied to financial security that you have to give up things that really would've made it much easier for him."

David: "This year alone, my wife and I have spent \$10,000 out of pocket. Thank God I have good insurance, but it doesn't cover everything. I just keep saying, okay, it is what it is. It's helping me stay alive. It's helping me get to my goal, which is right now, dancing at my granddaughter's wedding. It all comes down to your positivity, and all of these people that I have in my life that support me on it are very positive, and I think that's so important."

"There was one day that I actually felt really down and my wife said, "Okay, we got to deal with this." So following through on the physical therapy, the exercises that I follow at home are basically leg strengthening, muscle strengthening, as well as back stretching and core tightening."

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"I'm feeling pretty good. The doctors, they're all working together to make sure I get through the finish line, which is the first quarter of 2025, and then six months later until they know how my body has reacted to it. But then I'll face the next stage as it comes. I try not to focus on the fact that I have cancer and that I'm getting treatment. I'm focusing on the fact that I need to stay well and keep going to make myself well."