

# Janil: Dealing with the financial hardship from Cancer Treatment

I'm a branch manager for a healthcare organization. We provide personal care aid services. I'm responsible for 200 patients and 300 home attendants who go out in the community and service patients who are homebound.

I've been in the home care industry for 33 years. I've had hundreds of patients to pass through the company who had breast cancer, and guess what? I'm on the other side of the desk now.

I got diagnosed with stage one breast cancer. The plan was, okay, it's small enough. We will remove the front half of your breast. They took the front half, and I had my chemo port put in. Have to do 30 radiation treatments, four chemo treatments over a course of six weeks. So that's where I'm at now.

My diagnosis has had a significant impact on me financially. I had to make a choice between paying my health insurance, getting treatment and paying rent.

I'm still paying rent late because I have to pay health insurance to get treatment, to keep working, to pay rent. So it's a vicious cycle. When you have to choose between staying alive and keeping a roof over your head, it's a tough choice to make.

I owe the hospital \$11,000 as of this week in unpaid medical bills. It's the surgery, the medication, the anesthesiologist, the follow-up appointments.

All of that plays a big part in it, and when you work, the state doesn't help you. So what do you do?

One of the things I had to do, which was kind of hard, I had to come to my employer and ask for a loan to at least get me going. So I don't have to struggle so hard.

Thank God they said yes, they agreed to help me. That's the blessing that I have.

A lot of people are not that fortunate where they can turn to their employer and say, "Listen, I need help." Most companies will say no. What happens to those people?

I'm trying to educate people, become that warrior. Fight for those who can't fight for themselves and bring awareness to our healthcare system.

Bring awareness to breast cancer, because this is not going to go away. The company has become advocates along with me.

They've become the warriors with me to educate employees, as well as their families on breast cancer health. So they have been there with me fighting the fight side by side.

To work in healthcare, you have to genuinely care about people. When you have a heart and a conscience and you do this job from the heart, everything falls in place. We all have a purpose.

My purpose, for some reason, I'm a humanitarian. Even though I say I'm not going to help, I have to do it. Thank God I have a good spirit, high spirits. I'm a positive person.

For me personally, it's a part of life. It happens. You can't sit down and lick your wounds.

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You got to move forward. I do a lot of things for the community through work. I do the unhoused project where we provide blankets and hygiene kits to those who don't have housing.

We identify a need within a community where either we work or we live. Let them know what our community needs, and they give us the tools to distribute what they need.

They have been very supportive in helping us to become a light in the community for those that are less fortunate than we are.

I look at myself like it could be me. No one is exempt from becoming homeless, from cancer or from any illness. None of us are exempt.

What about these women or these men who have no place to go, no access to healthcare and they get cancer? If I could just bring a little bit of humanitarian back to them, be it in healthcare, be it in their community, be it the unhoused, whatever it is, seniors just do it. Everybody wants financial wealth.

People don't understand. Sometimes you could be wealthy in just the things you do in your neighborhood. That wealth means more than anything in the world because guess what?

You leave a legacy. Money comes and goes, but your reputation is with you for a lifetime.