What One Bladder Cancer Survivor Learned About Speaking Up, Staying Informed and Monitoring for Recurrence

(NAPS)—At 33 years old, Brent never imagined that bladder cancer could be the cause of the symptoms that were slowly taking over his life. What followed was a journey that taught him the importance of listening to his body, building a trusted healthcare team, understanding options for monitoring recurrence after treatment, and leaning on others for support.

Today, Brent has no detectable signs of cancer and is grateful for the advances in cancer care that helped him and continue to guide his care. This includes Signatera™, a personalized blood test designed using information from his tumor to look for small traces of cancer in the blood and that provides patients and doctors with additional information as they monitor for recurrence after treatment.



But before he reached this point, Brent spent years searching for answers.

Starting in 2018, he experienced recurring episodes of severe pain during urination. The episodes became longer, more frequent and disruptive, sometimes forcing him to miss work. Yet despite multiple medical visits over two years, cancer was not initially suspected.

"I was young and healthy," Brent recalled. "The pain was excruciating, but since I was so young and didn't have blood in my urine, no one thought to look for cancer."

Everything changed in March 2020 when a urine cytology test revealed atypical cells. Additional testing quickly followed, including a bladder examination where Brent saw the tumors himself. Just days later, he received a diagnosis of stage III muscle-invasive bladder cancer.

While hearing the word "cancer" would be tough for anyone, Brent remembers feeling an unexpected sense of relief. "After years of pain and uncertainty, I finally had answers," he said.

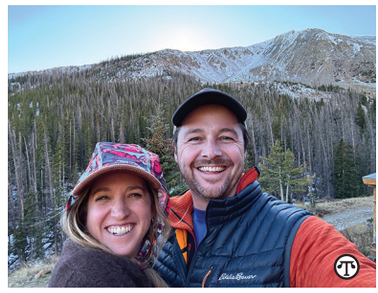
Looking back, he wishes he had pushed harder for answers sooner.

"If something doesn't feel right, keep asking questions," he said. "Don't be afraid to seek another opinion. I saw nearly half a dozen physicians before my diagnosis."

Following his diagnosis, Brent underwent chemotherapy and surgery to remove his bladder. The treatment and recovery were challenging, but he focused on moving forward and relied on a healthcare team he trusted to help guide him through difficult decisions.

By the end of 2020, after months of healing and adjusting to a new normal, Brent believed the cancer was behind him. Like many cancer survivors, however, his journey did not end when treatment was over.

As part of his follow-up care that same year, he began using the Signatera test—which is personalized based on the unique molecular signature of his cancer—every six weeks. For patients



New ways of testing for cancer helped one young man overcome it twice.

with muscle-invasive bladder cancer, Signatera has been shown to detect relapse a median of 96 days earlier than imaging, which can provide another source of information for monitoring recurrence.[1] This blood test became an important component of discussions with his healthcare team as they monitored his health after treatment.

Over time, the Signatera results began to show a concerning trend. "My doctors noticed the numbers were rising," he said. "That prompted additional testing to figure out what was going on."

In 2022, a subsequent PET scan revealed enlarged lymph nodes, confirming that Brent's cancer had returned. Armed with that information, Brent and his healthcare team moved quickly. He began another course of chemotherapy followed by immunotherapy.

For Brent, the experience reinforced another lesson he now shares with other patients: Understand your options for monitoring after treatment. While follow-up scans remain an important part of survivorship care, he believes patients should have conversations with their healthcare teams about all of the tools available to help monitor their health.

During Brent's second round of treatment, his Signatera results dropped to undetectable levels, providing another piece of information for discussions with his care team.

Today, Brent has no detectable signs of cancer. "Modern medicine is amazing. With Signatera, I was able to find my cancer and eradicate it—all months before traditional surveillance even would have found it!"

For many people diagnosed with cancer, treatment marks the beginning of a new chapter rather than the end of the story. Survivors often face years of follow-up appointments, scans, and ongoing uncertainty.

The time between those appointments can be emotionally challenging. Many survivors describe experiencing "scanxiety," the anxiety that builds while waiting for the next scan or test result. Personalized monitoring can provide additional information between scans, helping patients feel more informed and empowered.

Every patient's cancer journey is different, which is why personalized approaches to care and monitoring are becoming increasingly important.

Most importantly, Brent wants other cancer survivors to know that they are not alone.

"Every day we have more research breakthroughs. Be sure your care team is up to date on the newest and best. Don't forget to monitor your mental health as well. My diagnosis got me in therapy that I continue to this day."

To learn more about Signatera and its use across a range of cancer types, talk with your oncologist or visit www.natera.com/monitorcancer.