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### How Setbacks in Training Lead to Success in Urology

“It looks like you have a mass...” I had never been on the other side of this message. Now, three and a half years later, I relate differently to patients than when I started residency. There are many aspects of medicine and surgery; busyness bombards us all, but the ability to slow down and be present for our patients is critical.

Time stood still as I felt the mass in my left testicle. I called my soon-to-be fiancé who was a urology resident in Oklahoma. The longest Sunday night of my life followed. On Monday, I found my chief resident and told him I suspected I had a testicular mass. He comforted me and told me it was probably nothing major. Neither of us wanted to believe I may have cancer; he ordered my ultrasound, and I watched the screen flashing images while I lay there with my stomach gnawing. Reds and blues lit up the mass as I knew my journey would change forever.

I hurried to Tim Lyon’s office; Dr. Lyon is a urologic oncologist, my urologic oncologist, at Mayo Florida who started as faculty around the time I started residency. We talked and cried while preparing for the next steps. Despite knowing my need for surgery and potentially other treatments, I held a feeling of denial and optimism; I understood why patients froze when they learned of their diagnoses, their need for surgery, or their looming diagnostic tests.

The long wait for a pathology report that would reveal testicular cancer followed surgery. My urologic training journey interwove with my urologic treatment journey. I related to patients in ways I had never before. My story resonated with many of the patients I encountered who needed to understand they were not on a health journey alone.

The journey does not end after surgery. Surveillance scans, IVs for contrast, lab draws, the mental fatigue of waiting for results; these experiences sharpened my resiliency and encouraged my patience with my own health and in my work.

As the years go by, my own cancer journey impacts my patient counseling and helps me understand patient needs. While I remember the sadness, anxiety, and guilt I had surrounding my own cancer diagnosis, I remember more how thankful I am that my journey included testicular cancer. My diagnosis blessed me for many reasons; it forever changed my perspective on patient care, surgery and interactions with colleagues and family. We must use our professional and personal setbacks and challenges to grow and flourish in a positive fashion. We all have our own story, and we can use that story to positively impact the lives of people and patients around us. Nothing can prepare you for the words, “you have cancer...” And, nothing could have better prepared me to help patients than hearing the words, “you have cancer...”