

TREATABLE
AND
BEATABLE

Healing Cancer Without Surgery

CAROLYN GROSS

FOREWORD BY GERONIMO RUBIO, MD

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Claiming Your Power

It was one of those days when I needed to remind myself that healing cancer without surgery is a huge undertaking. Fortunately, I happened to be at my hairdresser's, and Jacque offered me some much-appreciated support. Then she asked: "What I want to know when I read your book is how did you find the confidence to not have the traditional surgery and chemotherapy recommended by three doctors? Where did you find the *power* to do things differently?" I promised her I'd cover that in the book, and later realized this is the perfect place to start. When engaging in the battle with cancer, you need to claim your place of power the moment you are diagnosed.

Dry mouth, nausea, hair loss, surgical-removal of body parts, metallic mouth, fried taste buds, fatigue, depression, and an underlying sense of doom: this is the standard operating procedure for treating cancer in this country. Is this how twenty-first-century cancer treatment should be?

In the summer of 2003, I was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. Always proactive with my healthcare and conscientious about annual mammograms, I found myself referred to a specialist who proposed the same treatment my grandmother had received thirty years ago—complete mastectomy, radiation, and chemotherapy. "And," the doctor added, "there are no guarantees."

A determined and informed consumer, I conducted research that led me to Mexico, where I met Dr. Geronimo Rubio, a physician whose successful treatment has helped hundreds. My results were remarkable

as well. Within a year, the cancer was gone. I kept my breast and my hair and was spared the physical and psychological horrors breast cancer patients often suffer. Four years later, I'm a cancer-free woman—going strong.

Have You Ever Questioned Your Doctor?

When it comes to diseases and selecting treatment, our free will and power of choice are important factors that most people don't fully utilize. Many patients let doctors dictate how long they will live, how their lives will be changed, and even what they should believe. All too often patients are so shocked with the diagnosis and overwhelmed that they don't have the wherewithal to call time-out and do their homework.

I belong to a women's networking group, and I was certain that everyone there knew I had recovered from cancer without surgery. When Karen was diagnosed, I offered my phone number and said, "I've been there; if you have any questions about treatment, or anything, just give me a call."

Her doctors advised a mastectomy and two weeks later, Karen underwent surgery. She never inquired about my treatment, and I had to guess she assumed my doctors recommended no surgery. When I mentioned that I'd chosen immunotherapy, she had no questions to ask. I tried to extend her an olive branch of information or hope, but she never called. Not wanting to interfere, I waited.

Karen was in her sixties and stated before her surgery, "It's no big deal to lose my breast." But afterward, when she saw the scar, she had a change of heart. One day she wailed, "I decided too quickly. I *let them* talk me into surgery!"

My heart went out to her, making me more determined to inform recently diagnosed patients and their family members that they need to claim their power and investigate all options. You may well get some of your best treatment advice from other survivors, so use them as a resource. Inquire, search, and delve into books and websites like Adju-

vant! for the latest research on how to treat cancer and support your body during treatment. Be open to help from others as well as to what's offered by your surgeon or oncologist. Bring your research to them, and see if you might be able to supply another piece of the puzzle. There is hope and there are options, and these pages will help you claim your power to find both. You have to believe in your healthcare team, treatment protocol, and yourself. Don't become a victim of your diagnosis; become a victor, and trust your instincts. It's these subtle nuances that are vital to listen to, even when you're emotionally reeling from the shock of diagnosis.

Before Karen's surgery, I'd once hinted: "Not everybody has surgery, you know." But she never asked, "What do you mean?" My offer went unheeded, so I knew all I could do was just observe her process. (For caregivers and loved ones, this is the reality.) It wasn't easy; there was so much I wanted to say, but I kept silent. Now I can share those unspoken words with you.

Your Body...Your Choice

I've talked to hundreds of women and men who want to surgically remove their cancer as soon as possible. This is understandable, since surgery has been the accepted treatment for years and years, engrained into us as the only way to solve the cancer problem. I've watched women diagnosed with breast cancer practically sleepwalk their way to the surgeon's table without a second thought. But it's important to wake up and find out what is right for you before you take a step like surgical removal of a body part.

You want to be confident and sure in your soul about both the treatment protocol and the doctors you select to have on your medical team. Don't cave in to hasty pressure. It took awhile for the tumor to develop, so taking a few weeks to get second and third opinions makes good sense and rarely puts one in jeopardy. I know there are exceptions to this rule with certain aggressive cancers, but you do have a little window of time for decision making. Use it!