

The View From Here

By: Justine Chichester

"Life imposes things on you that you can't control, but you still have the choice of how you're going to live through this." — Celine Dion

As our city begins to open up once again, little by little, this month, my decision to emerge from isolation was sort of forced on me. As a recent breast Cancer survivor, I have to have mammograms every 6 months. I knew I had, before the Coronavirus pandemic, scheduled my latest follow up for early June. I had been isolating, with my husband, at home since mid-March. The only time I had left the house was for short walks down my sidewalk and back. I hadn't even gone to the grocery store, as we had our groceries delivered during this quarantine. Trying as best we could to be safe from the virus. All the while I had the date of the follow up mammogram looming over me, like impending doom.

As the mammogram date drew closer, I had two choices – to go or not to go? I could cancel because of my fears of the virus or I could get my mask, my hand sanitizer and just go. These 6-month exams are so important, especially for me, who just had a lumpectomy last year. So, my decision was clear. I would have my scheduled testing done. I had so many concerns venturing out after being home for so long. My biggest concern was, of course, the Coronavirus and would Baptist Hospital take enough precautions before, during and after my testing, to keep me protected?

The morning of my mammogram arrived. Early, early morning. I loaded up my wheelchair into the car, put on my mask and brought plenty of hand sanitizer to disinfect an entire army, if I needed to. Once I got there, I was pleasantly surprised. Everyone was wearing a mask, the staff did temperature checks at the front door, the seats in the waiting room were spread very far apart and there were marks on the floor, 6-feet apart, for people to wait separately in line. There were also very few people there, which was a huge relief. The entire process that morning made me feel very comfortable and very safe.

The moral of my story is, if you have an important medical test or appointment scheduled during this global pandemic, do not wait to have that exam done. I am a testament to how important it is to not wait several months to get your testing done. If I had waited another several months last year, I may have needed a more invasive surgery than what I actually had, and possible chemotherapy, which I did not need since we caught the Cancer early. I've learned from that. And from my recent experience, it is clear to me now that our medical professionals are taking the utmost precautions to help you feel and be safe.

The good news is, my latest mammogram was clear, and I continue to be Cancer free! I go back again in six months for another check, pandemic or no pandemic. We'll just have to see what the coming months bring!