



Surviving Skin Cancer by Jeremy Abbott



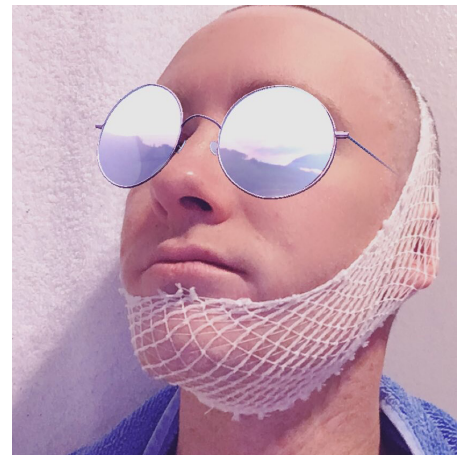
Cancer. The dreaded C-word! A word we all know too well. One that has touched every one of us so deeply and personally. A word that creates fear the same way it creates itself, one cell at a time until one is completely consumed by it.

I, and I know a majority of you, have been affected by this fear all too personally. I lost a grandfather to prostate cancer; I've watched my mother survive multiple bouts with skin cancer, and, strictly speaking, I myself am a cancer survivor. Three years ago, I was diagnosed with a basal cell carcinoma on the very top of my head. For those not in the know, basal cell carcinoma is a type of skin cancer that usually grows slowly. It is rare for them to spread, or metastasize, to nearby lymph nodes or even to more distant parts of the body.

Having seen my mother survive three different types of skin cancer I was aware of the relatively benign nature of this form of the C-word. I consider myself to be extremely lucky that I didn't have anything more aggressive. Even knowing the nature of this form of cancer and that my life was in no real danger; there is still nothing that can prepare you to hear the words, "You have cancer."

I vividly remember getting the phone call from my dermatologist's office. The nurse informed me they had gotten the results back from my biopsy. Then she said very clinically and nonchalantly, "You have cancer". Even though she just delivered a gut punch that left me gasping for air, I let her finish talking, and collected all the information she had for me before politely hanging up the phone. It was one of those movie moments, where that ring tone starts playing in your ear and it just keeps getting louder until all other sound drops out and nothing is left but fear... and that ringing!

Fortunately, all that was required for treatment was an outpatient procedure called Mohs surgery. I was able to put it off until I had made it through the most rigorous of my skating commitments. I flew from my last one in Japan straight to Colorado to have my surgery. As it was explained to me, it would be a minimally invasive procedure where thin layers of cancer-containing skin are progressively removed and examined until only cancer-free tissue remains. In my mind this procedure would be akin to a deli slicer leaving me with some raw skin dressed in gauze. The reality of it was 13 staples, 4 internal stitches, a head wrap that left me looking like a ripe Asian Pear, and a facelift that, while leaving me without a single line or wrinkle, was one I definitely didn't want!



With May being skin cancer awareness month, I am so humbled to be highlighted as a board ambassador for Scott Cares. Being able to share my story and endlessly tell you all to wear sunscreen/ protect yourself from the sun, the way my mother does to me, is such an honor (one that I don't take lightly)! Scott and every warrior at Scott Cares fight tirelessly for everyone who has ever been affected by cancer. They work to ease the fighting of others, to increase survivorship, and eventually to end the battle all together. I've joined them, and I hope you'll join me, to work towards a future where no one will have to hear that word ever again.

Together we will turn cancer upside down!
- Jeremy Abbott