



Podcast Transcript A Patient's Story: John Bailey

HOST:

Please tell us a little bit about yourself—where you're from and what you like to do.

JOHN BAILEY:

I'm John Bailey. I'm a physician from northern Utah—Logan—about 30 miles from the Idaho border. And we like to do anything from gardening, to sailing, to visiting the grandkids, raising and eating good food, and just enjoying life.

HOST:

Can you tell me a little bit about when you were diagnosed with multiple myeloma and the circumstances surrounding your diagnosis?

JOHN BAILEY:

We were diagnosed in the summer of 2003. I just had some persistent hip pain that didn't go away, and I had just written it off to some degenerative changes—just becoming an old guy—and had actually been out playing tennis with my son, and chasing balls to the side of the court was getting increasingly more difficult and painful and I finally determined that it was probably something other than just a routine ache and pain and went in to get it worked up.

And they found a space-occupying lesion in my right hip. And other places with further workup.

HOST:

And were you experiencing any other kinds of symptoms, and how severe were those symptoms?

JOHN BAILEY:

I was probably, in retrospect, experiencing some mild fatigue, and again I was just attributing some of it to age. It was severe enough that it was getting in the way of a good, vigorous tennis game. And again a month before that we'd been back in Chicago on a family vacation and walking the Magic Mile or whatever it is back there and seeing all the museums and being on our feet a lot. And I'd noticed some right sciatic pain and laying in the bed at night some numbness in my right foot.

So it had been going on for about two or three months and I just, at the end of the summer, finally decided that it was something significant enough to look in to.

HOST:

Had you ever heard of multiple myeloma before you were diagnosed?



JOHN BAILEY:

Yes, I went to medical school here nearly 40 years ago and, as I recall, only had one case of myeloma in my medical school and internship and residency experience. So, I knew of it and had experienced it directly that one time, but certainly that was about the limit of my experience.

HOST:

And so what did you know of it?

JOHN BAILEY:

Well, my recollection was that it was a very serious disease. That is was certainly a type of bone marrow cancer. That it was non-curable and that the mortality—the length of life—once it was diagnosed or becoming very active was very short.

And as I reviewed the literature once I was diagnosed I found that, at least the standard at that time, that story hadn't changed all that much.

HOST:

And what kinds of treatments have you been through since you were diagnosed?

JOHN BAILEY:

Our treatment consisted of something called pre-induction chemotherapy. Then we did two stem cell transplants back-to-back about three months apart. Several rounds of post-transplant chemotherapy, and then a year of what they called maintenance therapy.

And that all completed just about a year ago now. So, all told, it was two to three years of treatment from beginning to end although we were successful in getting the disease in remission fairly early in that process.

HOST:

And what has the treatment process been like for you?

JOHN BAILEY:

I don't know whether I've just got a short memory or what, but in retrospect it wasn't nearly as bad in any respect including all of the bone marrow biopsies and the stem cell transplants. None of it was as bad as I had envisioned it as being. And I'm sure that with the wonderful results we've received that some of the negative parts of it are erased and that we had some tough days, weeks, and even months.

But that, five years later, is all kind of receding and being overshadowed by the positive results that we've experienced.



HOST:

So, overall, how are you feeling today?

JOHN BAILEY:

I'd say that I'm probably back to eighty or ninety percent of the pre-cancer state. I'm getting ready to run a half marathon with my son—who's sitting here—in about a month from now. And we just got back from tending our grandkids in California and enjoying the California weather.

So we're able to travel, enjoy our family, to be physically active, and life is good.

HOST:

And when you were going through treatment, how did you find the inner strength to keep enduring?

JOHN BAILEY:

I think a lot of that was certainly due to support of my wife and family. The whole importance of caregivers and the primary caregivers and the importance that the program that we went to placed on that certainly was a primary factor. And so the support of family was really important.

All of the things that were unfinished in life to do that you just knew you had to get to motivated you to say, "Look we've still got important things to do."

HOST:

What advice would you give to someone who has just been diagnosed with multiple myeloma?

JOHN BAILEY:

From attacking the disease itself—and I use that work 'attack' because I think it really is a fight—I would seek out the best help that you could get. The fact that this is still an incurable disease, but the fact that they're making such wonderful progress that we've seen just in the last five years that there's such hope for this disease that I would make every effort you can to seek out the best help that you could. And I define that as not just one individual—one physician—but a whole team of people who are dedicated to that disease, who have a great deal of experience with it, who themselves hold out a great hope and are hoping for a cure.

If you seek out that kind of thing—that kind of treatment—and just give yourself every advantage that you can I think that would be my advice.

HOST:

And from a patient perspective, do you have any advice to the caregivers?



JOHN BAILEY:

Yes, they need to remember to take care of themselves. Both because they really can't take care of the patient unless they first take care of themselves so it's important that they continue to be nurtured in any way that they can. Hopefully they'll just be nourished by the gratefulness for the patient, who realizes that that cure isn't something that you do by yourself. It really is a team effort between the patient, the patient's physician, the dedicated nurses, and the caregiver and the family.

It's a team effort. Quite a sport!

HOST:

And you mentioned that you were a physician as well. Any advice and words of wisdom from that physician's perspective?

JOHN BAILEY:

Well, my specialty was preventive medicine—is preventive medicine—and so when I was first diagnosed with this if there was any small comfort it was that this was a disease that, as far as we know, we don't know how to prevent it in the first place.

If I would have come down with something that I have spent a career trying to prevent and then got it myself, I probably would have kicked myself around the block. But I think that it's really important to take as good care as you can of yourself—physically, mentally and spiritually—whether or not you ever experience anything like that or when you do you're better equipped to deal with it when it comes.

And, indeed, in that sense you are your own best physician and medical care team and I think you're served well if you take that kind of approach to life.

HOST:

Okay. Do you have anything else you'd like to say?

JOHN BAILEY:

I remember forty years ago, as a medical student, seeing some of the leukemias and so on that are in the same position that myeloma is today— where it was non-curable—and because of some of the wonderful advances that have been made over that period of time, those leukemias now are completely treatable and curable in a great number of instances.

And I think hopefully because of what Dr. Tricot now and the Huntsman Cancer Institute is trying to do here that that same thing will become a reality with multiple myeloma, in hopefully the not-too-distant future.



And if there's any chance of that happening it will be because of the efforts of wonderful researchers and dedicated people like Dr. Tricot, the team he has here, and putting a specific focus on this terrible and dreaded disease.

HOST:

Okay. Well, thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

JOHN BAILEY:

Thank you.

To find out more about multiple myeloma and the Myeloma Program at Huntsman Cancer Institute, visit <http://www.fightmyeloma.org>.