

Pink is Not the Only Color of the Rainbow

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Hands up! Who knows which cancer teal represents? No? Who even knows what color teal is anyway! OK, well if you've read any of my columns you'll know the answer is ovarian cancer. I started you on an easy one. Here's a more difficult one. What are the symptoms? Can you remember from last September's Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month? "Uh, bloating maybe, pain, some kind of pain". Well, if you didn't come up with four out of the following five then my work here isn't done: bloating, pelvic pain, urinary symptoms, digestive irregularity and fatigue. Didn't get them all? Then I hope you never do, because 2 out of 3 women diagnosed with ovarian cancer die of their disease.



Who knew that there were other colors of the cancer rainbow than pink? Who knew that there are other cancers we should all be educated to be aware of. This month when I went into my cancer clinic, every staff member was wearing a pink ribbon T-shirt. If I go into the hobby shops, after having searched high and low for teal trinkets, I have to gaze at a check out rack full of pink ribbons, pink pens with ribbons, a pink ribboned Hello Kitty, a pink ribbon flashlight.... the list goes on.

Please, please let's make pink just another color, and help other cancers, who are just as worthy for a chance to get their awareness message out. Maybe breast cancer does affect more women, and all the stories of lost survivors make it newsworthy, heart rendering and sadly even profitable for major companies who want to get a slice of the pink pie. But overall only 1 out of every 5 women diagnosed with breast cancer die from their disease. In the last thirty years, it's gone from incurable to practically curable. And why? Because of awareness campaigns. The survival rate for ovarian cancer has edged up only 5-10 percentage points from 30-40%.

Don't get me wrong, breast cancer awareness is a wonderful thing. And I have nothing against breast cancer survivors, my mom and aunt are two of them. But enough is enough. Most non-breast cancer survivors are sick of the barrage of pink lauded in front of them during October, but most annoyingly during the rest of the year too. So move over pink. You are not the only color of the rainbow.

If I had a 4 out of 5 chance of beating ovarian cancer, I would be jumping up and down with joy. But my cancer whispered, it crept up on me with only the slightest hint. There were no major awareness campaigns. No teal yoghurts, no teal ice hockey games, no teal ribbons. If there had of been, I probably wouldn't be fighting for my life now. But Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is here to stay, and I'm praying I'll get to see it be the major color fest that pink is today. Because "teal" we meet again next September, I'm not going to stop trying to save the lives of the women you love.

Kay Kerbyson lives with her family in West Richland. She is a local and national cancer advocate, and Founder/President of Ovarian Cancer Together Inc, a non-profit organization supporting and networking women across the state. More information can be found at her website www.ovariancancertogether.org or by email at Kay@ovariancancertogether.org