



Mother who has been cured of cervical cancer urges all women to attend cervical screening appointments

A mother who has been cured of cervical cancer is urging all women to attend cervical screening appointments.

In 2011 Kate Tonner, now 40, had been putting off her screening for a year before a nurse persuaded her to have it done after the mother-of-one had raised concerns during a routine appointment.

Kate said: “That trip to the nurse literally changed, and saved, my life. I had only gone to the GPs for a hepatitis vaccine and the nurse noticed I was overdue my screening so convinced me to have it done there and then.

“If you are due, or are overdue, please do book a smear test as soon as possible. That short appointment really could save your life.”

Kate, who was living in Nuneaton in 2011, mentioned to the nurse that she had experienced some bleeding in between periods, but had put it down to a change in her contraceptive pill. The nurse convinced Kate to have a cervical screen immediately.

After experiencing some pain during the procedure the nurse commented that Kate had bled a little and that the cervix looked ‘angry’. The nurse referred the mother of one to George Eliot Hospital for further tests.

Doctors at George Eliot Hospital suspected early stage cervical cancer and referred Kate to University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) NHS Trust for a biopsy.

A second scan at UHCW confirmed that the cancer was worse than originally suspected; it had spread to Kate’s pelvis. More bad news was to follow for Kate – following chemotherapy and radiotherapy a further scan revealed the cancer had spread further, this time to the area of her kidneys.

Kate said: “The outlook was not very good, I was told my radiotherapy would now be palliative to prolong my life. The treatment had stopped the tumours growing so I was booked in for more surgery to remove some of the cancers.

“I was really unwell after the surgery. I went through early menopause due to the treatment, it was a really tough time for me and my family.”

Devastatingly, a scan six months later showed that Kate’s cancer had returned. Doctors at UHCW discussed with Kate the possibility of being involved in a cancer



treatment trial called CyberKnife – a fully robotic radiotherapy device delivering precise doses of radiation with extreme accuracy.

Kate responded well to the treatment, and in 2015 was told she was now cancer free. A follow-up scan in November this year revealed no cancer was present.

Kate, who now lives in Stratford-upon-Avon, added “I’m so grateful to all of the doctors involved in my care and for the opportunity to be part of the CyberKnife trial; it really did save my life.

“My story could have ended so differently. My diagnoses were just about as bad as it could get and doctors are amazed that I have been able to survive and continue living a healthy life.

“My story could have ended horribly differently. Cervical screening is there to pick up early signs of cancer, so that doctors can stop it growing into something less manageable like I had. My message to all women is to book your smear test as soon as you are asked – it can save your life.”

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