

THE HOURS

Tamra Travers, Class of 2016

malignancies, neoplasms, cancers

Described in gruesome detail, page after page after page. I spend my hours studying cytogenetic markers, defective receptors and signaling pathways. The cells do not die. They are constantly replicating, constantly creating more and more and more cells that will never stop growing on their own.

leukemias, lymphomas, neuroblastoma, esophageal cancer, breast cancer

But all I see on these pages are the faces of warriors. Faces of children, grandparents, and friends. Playful blue eyes and flowing blonde hair on a slender frame only 8 years old, always dancing. Deep dark brown eyes of wisdom and understanding, but these eyes also know laughter well. All familiar faces of determination, courage, and tenacity. These faces that are so dear to me are formed from the medical terminology and microscopic images.

Many conquered and now live with the agonizing memories of how the poisonous drugs slowly destroyed the cancer cells and so many of their own cells alongside, leaving their bodies ravaged and weak. Their faces are now strong with new flesh and color that radiates. The fear of recurrence or new cancers still hauntingly lingers.

And there are some who do not live with this fear. Whose faces are memories, still pale and thin. Their physical weakness was crippling, but their soul's strength carried the unknowable weight of death forward into the distant pages we cannot yet see.

Tamra Travers is a third year medical student. She records personal reflections on her medical education adventure on her blog White Coat Wonder: Reflections on Health, People, and My Journey from Girl to Physician. The blog is available at www.whitecoatwonder.tumblr.com

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