

# Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



**Cindy Lupica,**  
**Age: 41**  
CHORIOCARCINA PLACENTA CANCER

"We were shocked, but we were glad to finally have an answer. After a long day, it was rush, rush, rush, They admitted me that night."

"The following morning and day was nothing but tests. The cancer had metastasized to my right lung."

"I was diagnosed on Feb. 1, had a pick line and chemo on the third, and went home on the fourth."

Lupica had four rounds of the chemotherapy drug methotrexate, but rising BHCG levels indicated she was resistant to the chemotherapy. So, doctors switched her to EMA-CO, which consisted of "five different chemotherapies given in two weeks with every other week in the hospital for three to four days," she said.

"It was inpatient, outpatient, inpatient for six-and-a-half months. I finished on July 21, 2014."

Lupica's treatment was very rough on her family, too. "My husband was left to take care of the children," she said.

"My oldest was 14. She became the second caregiver and second mom. My next child was 12, the next, 4, and the baby was 4 months."

"I had to stop breastfeeding that night. I couldn't anyway because I was so dehydrated from blood loss. My husband had to scramble for formula that night."

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*"This is a very aggressive cancer and time is everything..."*

"The roughest was being away every other week - I was treated in Colton."

"It was hard having children and no immune system. We basically lived in our own little bubble in our house. I had no immune system half the time."

"The inpatient treatment wiped me out. I would usually go in on Monday, and then come home Wednesday or Thursday, I would sleep until Saturday, and then on Monday back to the outpatient."

"Outpatient didn't make me so bad. My main complaint was with the last two chemo, I had really bad jaw pain, headache and lost my balance - it was really hard for me to walk."

"The biggest thing I learned from all this, because I am a very spiritual person, is I learned God's grace and God's mercy. I learned to leave it to Him, Lupica said."

"I have always taken life pretty seriously, but now I just appreciate things more," Lupica said. "I have used the experience to help others. I am a strong awareness and support advocate."

Lupica sought out support groups for her type of cancer, but "There wasn't any support or information out there when I was diagnosed," she said. So, I started my own support groups and my own awareness page and website.

"When my group became active, the healing started for me. One group has almost 500 girls, that's the main group. Then I have an after chemotherapy chorio group. Then I have a remembrance angel group for caregivers and families of those who died from chorio."

Lupica has an important message to share: "With this particular cancer, I definitely say get in to the doctor right away. This can happen from any miscarriage, pregnancy or abortion."

A special home pregnancy test could be a tipoff to choriocarcinoma. "A lot of these girls are scared and their doctor won't let them in because they don't believe them," Lupica said. "If a home pregnancy test is positive, get in to the doctor right away."

"This is a very aggressive cancer and time is everything. It spreads through the blood via microscopic trophoblast cells. It spreads from the uterus to lung, liver and brain."

In addition to her own online support groups, Lupica says she is "also deeply involved with

## Caregiver Perspective



"It was traumatic when I first heard," Mike Lupica said of his wife's cancer diagnosis. "I was with her. It wasn't easy, that was for sure."

"I wasn't really thinking in that frame of mind where I was looking at how bad it is going to be. I didn't focus on the negative, I just play it day by day. Each day is a challenge, why bring on more?"

For others facing a cancer diagnosis, "I would say pray about it," Mike said. "Whether they have a belief system or not, they have to pray the outcome will be OK. Pray for strength each day."

the American Cancer Society Relay for Life.

"I also try and do fundraisers for Brigham and Women's hospital in Boston," she said. There, the Choriocarcinoma Research Fund supports the work of Donald Goldstein, MD, now retired and the founding father of the New England trophoblastic center.

Four years after diagnosis, Lupica says, "I do have a small percentage chance of recurrence because it did metastasize to my lungs. My levels are remaining negative. It has been four years now."

**Cindy's online links**

IHadCancer blogs:  
<https://www.ihadcancer.com/cindylupica>

Website:  
<https://www.choriocarcinomamolarpregnancyawareness.com>

Facebook awareness page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/choriocarcinomaandmolarpregnancy/>

Facebook support groups (3):  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/738413552944333/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/115555734558021/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/392597667697371/>

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May 12-13, 2018  
Relay For Life of the High Desert

May 19-20, 2018  
Relay For Life of the High Desert

Register online to be included in the upcoming events and fundraisers to support our local cancer survivors and honor those that have lost their battle!

[www.relayforlife.org](http://www.relayforlife.org)  
[www.hdcancerconnection.com](http://www.hdcancerconnection.com)

Liz.mcgiffin@cancer.org 760.887.3427

## The Basics:

- **Resides:** Longtime resident of the High Desert
- **Occupation:** Home school mom, teaches yoga
- **Family:** Husband, Mike, 51, and four children
- **Hobbies:** Custom cakes, scrapbook, yoga

Cindy Lupica, 41, was pregnant with her fourth child during 2013, when she began noticing symptoms that she knew were not normal.

She had vaginal itching during her first few months of pregnancy, which the doctor attributed to a normal increase in hormone levels. Lupica had three normal prenatal ultrasound procedures. But she began having contractions at her twenty-fifth week of pregnancy until she delivered her baby about 14 weeks later

Lupica and her baby made headlines in the Daily Press when her daughter was born in an ambulance on the way to St. Mary Medical Center.

Since she had placenta previa with her first pregnancy, a decision was made to have the placenta delivered at the hospital. It was healthy and fully intact.

But Lupica was naive from blood loss during the birth, and her daughter had an infection, so the baby went to the neonatal intensive care unit, and they both "stayed in the hospital longer than normal."

"Here's where the story gets complex," Lupica said.

"After my daughter's birth, I had a four-week, post-partum checkup and everything looked good. Somewhere between there and six weeks, I had a pap smear and everything looked good."

"I was bleeding for four weeks, and that kept on to eight weeks. It stopped for two weeks, then picked up again. I had intermittent spotting, start and stop, start and stop."

When her daughter was 4 months old, Lupica woke up one night hemorrhaging. Later the next day "I passed a clot," she said. "like a large, flat grape. Then I knew. I went to my husband crying and said, 'something is terribly wrong.'"

Lupica saw her doctor later that afternoon. "A vaginal ultrasound showed an image like a grapevine on the right side of my uterus. The doctor told my husband and I to go to the hospital the following morning," she said.

"I had heard of choriocarcinoma in the 'What to Expect When You're Expecting' book. It is rare, but I don't know if it is that rare. A lot of



girls are being diagnosed with it in my groups.

"We went the following morning and it took the hospital a little over 12 hours to get a diagnosis. They kept telling me I was miscarrying, or it was a heavy period. I told them 'I am not pregnant, it is not a period.'"

"That evening, I had a massive hemorrhage. I lost two buckets of blood, and the nurse kept saying it was a heavy period. I said, 'I am not going to go home and bleed to death.'"

"Finally, a doctor came in - I heard (he wanted) to find out what the heck was going on with me."

The doctor ordered a stat BHCG test that checks for a "pregnancy hormone. We had the test results within a half hour, and three doctors were telling us I had choriocarcinoma," Lupica said.

Choriocarcinoma is a malignant trophoblastic cancer, usually of the placenta.

"I had a molar pregnancy - our daughter had a twin, but the egg was missing DNA, so it was unable to fully form, and the placenta couldn't support a fetus. The abnormal cells turned into choriocarcinoma. The inevitable outcome of this type of pregnancy is cancer."



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