

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



About Me:

CITY: Hesperia

WORK: Housewife

FAMILY: Carlos Ibarra, 49; Carlos Ibarra Jr. 28, son; Isabel Ibarra, 26, daughter; Saul Ibarra, 19, son

HOBBIES: Church, Zumba, sewing

PHILOSOPHY: With God, everything; without him, nothing

“The sickness should not end us; we should end the sickness”



The American Cancer Society provides a 24 hour service to answer questions about diagnosis, insurance, local support and resources

**www.cancer.org or
call 800-227-2345**

If you or someone you know would like to be featured in this series, please contact Liz McGiffin at liz.mcgiffin@cancer.org.

Elida Ibarra, 53 Type of cancer: Breast cancer, Pancreatic

By Alberta Hale Crigler

Note: Elida Ibarra told her story with the help of her son Saul, who is a student at California State University at San Bernardino, and who translated for her.

When Elida Ibarra first heard she had been diagnosed with breast cancer, “I was in shock,” she said, “the only thing I could think about was a casket.”

The tumor was small, and it was removed. Afterward, Ibarra underwent radiation and was prescribed the estrogen-blocker Tamoxifen.

She said her initial emotion was fear.

“This illness changed my life,” she said. “I was a happy woman. My life did a complete 180.”

Ibarra, a lawful permanent resident of the United States, is married and has three children. Her immediate family and one brother live in the U.S.

With the rest of her relatives in Mexico, “My fear is not of dying,” she said, “my fear is being disabled and not able to move.”

“My children are everything in my life. Saul was 12 when I was diagnosed the first time. Because of him, I really tried to fight, and I got closer to my church.”

During her annual mammogram in July last year, doctors found another tumor in her breast.

Ibarra’s treatment plan going forward was to have a mastectomy and then breast reconstruction.

But during a scan done to plan reconstruction, doctors discovered Ibarra had pancreatic cancer, too.

“The pancreas cancer was tougher,” she said, “it was almost like a nightmare.”

On Nov. 1, 2018, Ibarra’s breast was removed, and on Nov. 29, the tumor on her pancreas and her gall bladder were removed.

“All of the cancer they have found is in early stages,” she said.

Ibarra has been prescribed a regimen of oral chemotherapy drugs. She will receive medication for her pancreas cancer for three years and medication for the breast cancer for five years.

Additionally, she is scheduled for an ultrasound in her remaining breast. “They saw a spot in it,” she said, “but they don’t think it is cancer.”

Ibarra also receives monthly injections “for my ovaries,” she said, “to suppress estrogen.”

She also is going to have a recheck on “a benign growth in my uterus that they say is from the Tamoxifen,” she said.

Ibarra has not yet undergone BRCA mutation testing. A positive result would indicate she has family members, including her children, who could be at risk of developing BRCA-related cancers, including breast, ovarian, pancreatic, colon and prostate cancers.

“I have a lot of fear about being examined for genetics,” she said, but I am thinking about it.”

Like many cancer patients, Ibarra also worries about insurance and financial hardship.

Her family qualified for Medical insurance through Covered California, but because of a pay increase at work, her husband’s medical insurance plan is changing.

“They are going to place us on a different medical plan now that will cost \$1,000 per month,” Ibarra said.

“I may have to go to Mexico for treatment because it is very expensive here.



“I am being treated at City of Hope, and they said I should come to them as soon as our insurance is cancelled, and they will continue my treatment.”

In spite of her fears, Ibarra says she finds she “values everything more.”

“I love life. I want to help other people so they don’t give up for anything. The sickness should not end us; we should end the sickness.”

“Everyone in my church has helped me. They pray for me, tell me they love me and give me motivating words.”

“The first time I saw my scar, I started crying, but no more after that. I am still alive at the end of the day.”

“My life isn’t dependent on one breast or on a scar.”

“Many people get depressed but I have never been depressed because of my illness. I try to get out more and not be depressed.”

It’s not the end of the world, the sickness. You have to tell yourself you are going to be OK. You are going to get through it. God is good.

A son’s perspective

“The whole month of November (2018) was brutal,” Elida Ibarra’s son Saul Ibarra said.

“She had to stay 10 days in City of Hope. My two aunts came from Mexico.

“The whole week I would take one aunt to visit and bring the other aunt back, then go to work from 3 p.m. to 12 a.m.

“I was going to school two days per week and working up to 40 hours per week at Stater Bros.

“My Mom is always very active. In December, it was really tough to see her barely even able to get out of bed and talk.

“Thankfully, for the last two or three months she has been getting better. It is still not what it was before, but hopefully it will be.”

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