



Advances In Breast Cancer Treatment: One Woman's 22-Year Journey

(NAPSA)—Despite undergoing two mastectomies in seven years, Margaret King, 67, still lived in fear that her breast cancer would return. She had good reason to be concerned, since six women in her family died from the disease. Unfortunately, her nightmare was realized when 14 years after her first relapse, the cancer returned and had metastasized and spread to her bones.

This time, Margaret's test results showed that she had an especially aggressive form of the disease, called HER2 positive metastatic breast cancer. The name comes from the human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 protein (HER2), which exists in normal cells in the body and aids in cell growth and development. Certain breast cancer patients have cells that make too much of this protein, and their cells divide and grow more rapidly than other cancerous cells, which by definition already divide and multiply abnormally. This fuels tumor growth at a quicker rate. Approximately 25 to 30 percent of women with breast cancer are HER2 positive like Margaret.

Fortunately, Margaret qualified to participate in a clinical trial using a then-experimental therapy called Herceptin (Trastuzumab), a targeted treatment for her specific type of breast cancer. Herceptin is designed to target HER2 protein; thereby stopping cell division and tumor growth.

Margaret's cancer responded to Herceptin. Her disease stabilized. Overall, the trial produced positive results in many of the other women too, and in September 1998, Herceptin was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

This year, Herceptin celebrates its five-year anniversary as the



Margaret King, who received a targeted therapy to fight breast cancer, enjoys spending time with her grandchildren.

first targeted therapy approved to treat metastatic breast cancer. To date, more than 100,000 HER2 positive breast cancer patients worldwide have received treatment with Herceptin.

In her two-decade long battle with breast cancer, Margaret has seen a number of treatments evolve but is hopeful that targeted therapies like Herceptin will be the future for cancer patients.

"If Herceptin has helped other women as much as it has helped me for the past several years, we have a lot to look forward to in the years to come," says Margaret. "I've been alive for 22 years since being diagnosed with cancer, and I expect to be alive for 22 more."

As with many drugs, Herceptin therapy has been associated with certain side effects. These effects occur rarely, but can include heart problems, severe allergic reactions, infusion reactions, and lung complications. Common side effects can include chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, headache, and pain. Patients should always consult their healthcare professional regarding the risks and benefits of therapy.