

GETTING THE BEST IN CANCER CARE

Over the last 15 years at Parkway Cancer Centre, we have seen countless advances in cancer treatment and technology. The battle against cancer is not an easy one, but with the right support, patients can find hope during their journey. We interview with some of the patients who have stayed with us in the last decade-and-a-half and find out where they are now.

To greater heights

When Nellie returned from Cameron Highlands after New Year's in 2006, she began to feel a small discomfort in her abdominal area. When the pain in her abdomen became unbearable, she immediately went to seek medical help from her company's doctors.

Nellie was diagnosed with a urinary tract infection, but after the discomfort persisted and symptoms developed into frequent cramp attacks, she was referred to a gynecologist for an ultrasound. It was then that she discovered she had a growth in her ovaries.

Upon further scans, she was confirmed to have a possibly cancerous tumour, and was told to consider immediate total hysterectomy.

"My mind was spinning; how can this be? Just 3 weeks ago, I was in the cool mountains of Cameron Highlands. Now, I am in the clutches of cancer."

"We were asked to seek a second opinion, but my mind was made up," shared Nellie. "I asked for the earliest surgery available."

"The next day, I was rolled into the operating theatre."

However, what awaited her post-surgery was more than she could handle. Her tumour had grown to such an extent that it also spread to her omentum, and she was subsequently staged with Stage 3C ovarian cancer.

"My husband asked our doctor to give it to us in plain English what Stage 3 cancer really meant... 'about 30% chance of survival'

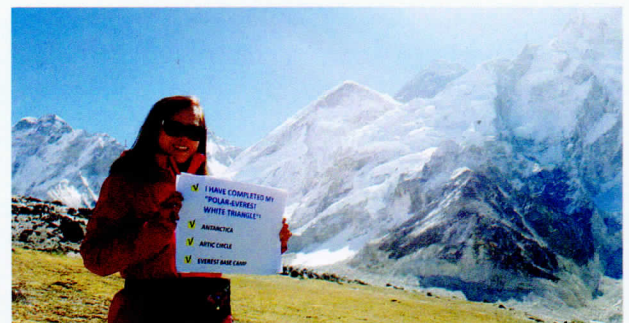
was her answer. It took a while to soak it all up."

However, little did Nellie know that hope was waiting around the corner. On the very day of her surgery, an article in the newspaper caught her husband's attention as he sat in the hospital's waiting area.

"It was titled 'One in 4 Singaporeans will die of cancer'. Few things could ever compare the irony of the situation that we were in. Here my husband was on the very day of his wife's surgery, and there it was, an article in the papers saying one in four people will die of cancer."

"But reading into the article a bit more, it was billed as a book of hope. My husband made it a point to seek out the book as soon as he could. He showed it to me and said that this book will bring something new to our fight against cancer."

For Nellie and her husband, it was fate that the book, *Doctor, I Have Cancer. Can You Help Me?* was written by PCC's very own Dr Ang Peng Tiam.



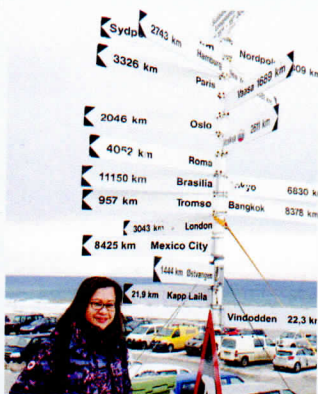
Nellie on her second trek to Mount Everest Base Camp in 2018.



"I read the book within a day!" shared Nellie. "In my mind, I was half dreading what's to become of me in the months ahead, but also what I can do inside me to win this fight... literally, the fight of my life. But the book showed me how the most aggressive of cancers can be stopped from spreading further, if not fully cured.

"After reading it, we both decided immediately that Dr Ang will be my oncologist from here on. The book brought us plenty of hope. And of course, Dr Ang himself!"

For the past 10 years, between travels to many countries and even Everest



'Staying healthy and well' is Nellie's motivation to travel as much as she can.

Base Camp twice, Nellie also makes what she likes to call a 'pilgrimage' to Mt. Elizabeth every 6 months.

"It is indeed an achievement to be able to trek given my cancer journey. However, until now, that trip to Mt. Elizabeth is the one that I find intimidating and fortuitous at the same time," said Nellie. "Intimidating because the needles await me, and one simply does not know if the results will be in my favour, but also fortuitous because I am very grateful that I am being looked after by excellent doctors like Dr Ang and his team."

"Dr Ang and his team of nurses have never failed to make me feel warm, secure and filled with a new zest for life... To hear your oncologist tell you 'you are in good shape, Nellie' is simply music to my ears!"

Staying reassured

It was after the birth of her second child in 1994 that Jennifer experienced abnormal menstruation bleeding that went on for 3 months. She was later diagnosed with Stage 1B cervical cancer. But with a toddler and a newborn to look after, she had to choose weekly radiation over cervix removal to manage her cancer.

Fortunately, she remained cancer free for 12 years—long enough to watch her children grow up.

However, when she received a high cancer marker during an annual company health screening in 2006, she got worried, particularly as her doctors did not give her a clear understanding of her cancer, or seem confident about the proposed treatment. That was when she decided to seek a second opinion from PCC's Dr Ang Peng Tiam.

"Dr. Ang's name came to mind because I remembered that he was the doctor who treated our Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for his cancer.

"When I first met Dr. Ang in 2006, I could feel his professionalism and genuine concern. This helped put me at ease," shared Jennifer.

"When earlier scans showed enlarged lymph nodes in the abdomen, the doctors suspected that I may have malignant lymphoma. I can recall the day when Dr. Ang told me about the results of my biopsy. He confirmed that it was a relapse of my cancer of the cervix. My cancer has metastasised to the lymph nodes adjacent to the blood vessels in my abdomen.

"As this was a cancer recurrence, it meant that it was already a Stage 4 disease. The news came as such a shock and I felt devastated. Dr. Ang calmly explained the findings, the need for chemotherapy, and he encouraged me to stay positive.



Jennifer received her 25 Years' Service award from her company in 2019.

"Before leaving his office, I believe he sensed my fear and made one comment: 'God is omnipotent'. With that I put my trust in him and God to guide me through the journey.

"By God's grace, 15 years have gone by and I remained cancer-free till now."

Fortunately, her decision to seek a second opinion was well worth it. 15 years on, Jennifer is currently in remission with quarterly follow-ups at PCC, and is living a full and happy life with the support of her family and company, where she will have served 28 years this May.

"Even after all these years, at every consultation, Dr. Ang is always cheerful and very reassuring, giving me the strength to cope and stay strong. He looks out for me every time especially when my medical reports show red markers—and even when I try to wriggle out of my PET scan because of my claustrophobia," Jennifer laughs.

"He is caring and compassionate, and is my first contact whenever I have a health issue. He is always available to



Jennifer celebrating her daughter's birthday with her son and his fiancée at home in 2020.

provide me advice and appropriate follow-ups, and make sure I am taken care of. Thumbs up, Doc! I am very thankful to have you in my life as my doctor and friend."

Jennifer attributed special thanks to Dr Ang, Sister Lek, Nurse Devi and Lena for contributing to her cancer journey.

She also thanked her specialists Dr. Hong who assisted with BRONJ on Jennifer's palate, as well as Dr Lee Kim Shang, whom she briefly encountered during her final radiation treatment after chemotherapy, as well as the rest of PCC staff.

"They always make me feel welcome whenever I am at the clinic. They take extra care during my chemotherapy and Zometa infusion so I don't hurt or bruise. They even spare time to chat so that I feel comfortable and at ease."

"It is very comforting to see PCC doing so much for the cancer society. I always feel assured that I am in good hands with PCC." ■

CANHOPE ONLINE SUPPORT PROGRAMMES MARCH 2021

DATE	TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
10 March, Wednesday	3:00 PM–4:00 PM	Gentle Yoga	Mr Paul Haverfield
17 March, Wednesday	11:00 AM–12:00 PM	Allergies and Intolerances	Mr Gerard Wong
23 March, Tuesday	3:00 PM–4:00 PM	Chair Yoga & Mindfulness Practice	Ms Wendy Chan

To register, scan the QR code or visit <https://www.canhope.org/event/support-programmes>
Alternatively, call us at (+65) 6738 9333 to register

