

That shitty google search I regret doing

If you google survival rate for inoperable bile duct cancer, also known as cholangiocarcinoma, you might be in for a ride of bad news. If you have not yet looked it up I recommend you to please not to and also to skip this brief chapter. If you're looking into informing yourself deeper about this rare, unplanned and unexpected type of cancer that your loved one is suffering from, you might not want to search online as it's almost inevitable to come across some hard truths. Instead, you might want to ask the doctor privately. Although if you have already done the search, then you might already know that it doesn't necessarily put your mind at ease, in fact, for me, it did quite the opposite. It took me little to no time to regret that search.

The thing is, my search was aimed to find some hope to grasp on, it was also meant to be informative - you know, actually know what my mum's going through and how I might be able to help her cope. But what I actually encountered was this:

The five year survival rate for intrahepatic bile duct cancer is 9%. If the cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, the five year survival rate is 25%. If the cancer has spread to the regional lymph nodes, the five year survival rate is 8%. If the cancer has spread to a distant part of the body, the five year survival rate is 2%.

In my case, the number that struck me was 8%. 8%. 8%

How do you cope with that information and then carry on living your day as if you hadn't read it? Or as if it was just another headline that you encounter while scrolling through instagram.

You are about to witness the person you love and admire the most go into a journey partially reduced to a percentage and are meant to stand there, watching, accompanying, staying strong, hoping for the best - staying grateful, staying present...but honestly, how? Isn't it almost inevitable that fear is going to creep in and sway you away into the world of cyclic anxious thoughts.

When I did all those google searches, I truly was trying to stay optimistic, it wasn't a self-torture method in which I was aware that percentage was going to come up. I guess maybe I was trying to find an explanation to how it all just came to happen and what is meant to happen next. After all, one day you notice your loved one is unwell, the next you're told it's a tumour, the next it's malign, the next it's got a name, the next you are expected to accept this is reality and is here to stay.

Just like that. No guide, no manual, no explanatory video of what to do next.

Everything had changed the minute I heard my mum's unwellness was cancer, but doing that search served as a confirmation of that reality. It's like, I had been trying to process what I had been told, trying to perhaps lessen the effect of it by telling myself "it can't be *that* bad, it's my mum, she's healthy, she's always been healthy" or "hopefully, there is a cure, more options... like with other cancers".

I wanted my heart to feel normal again. How, when, why?! And most importantly, why now? Why her?