



Cancer and Me

LAURA ORMANDY

CANCER, FOR ME, HAS MEANT CHEMOTHERAPY... it isn't all that bad, I'm not saying I enjoy it but I'm surviving it all better than I ever thought possible. I was diagnosed earlier this year with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, 16 years old, and I thought that was it... life as I knew it was over and I was ill! Not true, and Weston Park had a lot to do with making me realise the truth – whether to control the cancer or let the cancer control me. For once I had so much power... over one of the most notorious and hyped killers of our world today. Weston Park is a fantastic place, everyone knows my name and I know them... I'm not scared of it any more, but I will be honest and say I'm scared of what the place is about and what it is there for: I don't know a person who wouldn't be!

Walking in on my first visit was a day that changed my life – I was the youngest around, but I soon realised probably one of the luckiest. I met the most wonderful people who were so kind to me, and I think some knew by looking at me that I just wanted, or should I say needed to cry. I had to have a blood test that day, I started to cry, and Janet let me. She is a star... looking after me at every moment and always checking up on me... well, making sure that I'm not causing too much trouble for everyone!

For my chemotherapy I need to be an outpatient and visit the hospital every two weeks for a day's treatment. I usually arrive about 9am for my blood test then wait for about an hour to an hour and a half to see the doctor. If all is OK then I have another two hours, sometimes more, to wait for the pharmacy to make my chemotherapy combination. Then two hours for my treatment to finish – on a good day! The waiting is awful, it just gives me time to dwell on what's waiting for me in the next room... and seeing the nurses count down the minutes until they have me, 'Laura with the bad veins' again!

Whilst waiting one day, Janet came to see me and told me about the Teenage Cancer Unit and showed me the basic plans... what a difference that would make to the treatment of people like me. I had to go to Ward 3 one night because they thought I had the flu. Luckily I didn't and so was only there for about three or four hours... believe me, it felt like a week! This unit will be a place to go and be 'alive' again, to be back with people of the same age but that understand your feelings, both emotional and physical, where the hours would fly by. A place where I, personally would be able to go and just relax, where I wouldn't have to sit in one chair for hours on end waiting for my chemotherapy. It would just change the whole day for me, and for the lucky person whose turn it is to come with me. I think they would relax so much more, also knowing that there was somewhere else to go, not to feel like I was in a hospital waiting for treatment... and me not to have to try and smile at their attempts to make me laugh!

I can't believe the size of this project... it's amazing, and all the people involved are so committed to what they have set out to achieve, everyone just wants the best... and it looks like we're well on the way to getting a dream building. All the help and donations to the unit have been so fantastic, the committee have been able to design the unit in such a way that it will be the easiest and pleasantest place for a young person to be at a hard time in all of their lives. This building is going to change the lives of so many, see so many people recover, and be a place where many people will witness this change. A place of medicine, of care, of love, and of LIFE!

Thank you... everyone! ...It's not so bad, but it's about to get a lot better...

Laura later wrote in a letter to the Laura Crane Trust; "Thank you again for your support of the unit here in Sheffield. It has certainly helped to keep me positive and fighting for the third time. I can't wait to be better now, but I'm not afraid of the hospital and chemo, and some of that is down to you"