

September 24th: Jake's Story, written by Jake

My name is Jake and I was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma when I was a freshman in high school. It started when I noticed pain in my left arm. I went to the doctor and was told I probably pulled a muscle and was given muscle relaxers. Several months later the pain returned with a vengeance and nothing was helping. I went back to the doctor and this time they took an x-ray, followed by an MRI. When I returned the next day for the results, I remember hearing the word tumor and my mom crying, and I knew then it wasn't good.

It was that week when my life quickly changed. I had 3 appointments that week at very prominent hospitals and it was at the last appointment where I met Dr. John Healey, Orthopedic Surgical Oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering in NYC. I knew immediately this is where I wanted to be treated. Dr. Healey immediately performed a biopsy and quickly mapped out an aggressive chemo plan for me that began the following week. My mom and I would make the trip to New York every third week for me to complete my weekly round of chemo. We did this for seven months until the preventive treatment stage which I did at home.

After five rounds of chemo, Dr. Healey said the tumor had shrunk enough for him to perform surgery and remove the tumor. He cut my humerus bone right above my elbow to below my shoulder and removed the bone successfully. While I was still under anesthesia, Dr. Daniel Prince, an Orthopedic Surgeon, performed the next part of my surgery which was a limb-lengthening technique that is used to restore gaps in the bone after removal of the tumor. This technique gives people back their own bone by tricking it into thinking there's a fracture, so it makes new bone to jump across and seal the gap. I wore a device called an external fixator for the next 10 months. The morning after this surgery I recall waking up and thinking I made the biggest mistake of my life. I had this device with screws and wires attached to my arm. What was I thinking!? But as time went on I learned how to manage my everyday activities with the ex-fix. It was absolutely the best decision.

I finished chemo on November 3rd, 2017, and the ex-fixator was removed on March 1, 2018. After completing physical therapy on my arm and with a lot of hard work trying to get my stamina and strength back, I was able to return to my high school soccer team.

I learned a lot about myself throughout this journey. I am a lot stronger than I thought, and I now know I can handle anything. I beat cancer. I am a survivor!