

On September 17, 2015, Colette was diagnosed with Stage 1A lung cancer with an EGFR mutation after a lengthy road to diagnosis. She had never smoked, so the diagnosis came as a shock to her and her family.

After an unrelated procedure, Colette was experiencing heart palpitations. Thinking it might have something to do with her recent surgery, she went to the ER where the doctors checked for blood clots. However, after a CT scan, spots were discovered on her right and left lung. As someone who has never smoked, she was surprised at the discovery. However, the doctors were not very concerned, offering encouragement that it might just be an infection and to follow-up with primary care in six months to get scans again.

Instead of following the advice she received in the ER, Colette followed up after four months in case something more dire was going on. The scan revealed that her lungs still had spots and her primary care doctor referred her to a cardiothoracic surgeon. After that meeting, she decided she needed to find a doctor that was a better fit. Colette said, "Making sure you have a doctor who is thoughtful and thorough is incredibly important. They should be asking questions and wanting to have a conversation." Colette is a strong believer in advocating for your own health, especially during a critical illness like cancer.



After being recommended to a surgeon by a friend, Colette made an appointment, hoping this doctor would be different. To her relief, this doctor was empathetic and talked openly with her about her health and her concerns.

Colette had surgery to remove her upper left lung and has continued to receive scans every six months to monitor her lung tissue and watch for changes. A couple of nodules on her lung have completely disappeared and a couple others are still there, but have remained stable. Today, Colette is very happy to show 'no evidence of disease' AKA NED - a patient's best friend! She now receives her CT scan annually and feels hopeful.

When asked what frustrates her about the public's knowledge of lung cancer, Colette said, "If you have lungs, you can get lung cancer. It frustrates me that the current screening guidelines alienate people like me who have never smoked."

Colette shared, "There is a solution to every problem, but sometimes the solution doesn't come right away. Several years ago there was nothing on the market to treat EGFR mutations. Now there is so much. All of the advancement in science gives me hope."

Today, Colette emphasizes her desire to continue advocating for lung cancer research and to be a voice for those who are no longer here with us.

A Breath of Hope welcomes Colette's help and encourages all survivors to step up to be the voice of change!