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Press Releases

Vendor Information

Video Library

Web Nursery

Courageous Mother Overcomes Aggressive Breast Cancer

Memorial Breast Cancer Center Provides Treatment and Hope to Prenatal Patient

February 2007 — Arianne Abraham-Howey was overjoyed to discover she was pregnant. Although she was the proud mother of 18-month-old McKenzi, this pregnancy was particularly poignant, as she had miscarried a few months earlier.

Involved with family activities and new baby preparations, Arianne postponed a previously scheduled mammogram. She knew her mother would disapprove because she had a history of cancer in the family. However, she wasn't concerned about cancer because of the excitement surrounding her pregnancy; she was confident everything would be fine. After all, her family was full of cancer survivors — her brother beat leukemia, dad conquered colon cancer, and mom survived breast cancer. She honored her mother's request to at least have a breast ultrasound.



Arianne and her family now have a deeper appreciation for life after her successful triumph over breast cancer.

Unfortunately, the ultrasound revealed a lump. A biopsy was performed, and the results were heartbreaking: Arianne had infiltrating carcinoma of the breast. It was Stage 1 breast cancer — which means it was less than two centimeters in size and had not spread outside the breast. However, it was a very aggressive type of cancer. So aggressive, in fact, that in the two weeks between the ultrasound and the meeting with the doctor, the tumor had tripled in size.

"There was no time for tears," said Arianne. "I had a young daughter to take care of and a family that needed me."

Overwhelmed with this news, Arianne and her husband, Mark, actively researched oncologists to help them with this complex case. Their challenge was two-fold: find a doctor that could help her beat breast cancer while preserving the life of her unborn child.

Soon, they found themselves in the office of Sandra Franco, MD, oncologist at Memorial Regional Hospital, Memorial Regional Hospital South, Memorial Hospital West, Memorial Hospital Miramar and Memorial Hospital Pembroke. She recommended a course of action previous doctors had discouraged. "Arianne's type of cancer required chemotherapy," Franco said. "Chemotherapy is safe for pregnant women after their first trimester. Since Arianne was already eight weeks pregnant, they needed to wait four weeks before treatments could begin.

Arianne's tumor was removed and she began chemotherapy at Memorial Breast Cancer Center. She bravely coped with the side effects of nausea, heartburn and hair loss.