ALK Positive Lung Cancer UK

10 years living with ALK-positive lung cancer. 💙

It's now a decade since our Founder and Chair, **Debra Montague**, was diagnosed with lung cancer.

Debra shares her thoughts on reaching another anniversary. This year, she reflects on how quickly time has passed, the friends she has lost along the way, the advances in treatment and research, and why advocating for people affected by lung cancer remains so important to her.



In Debra's own words:

"It's 10 years since my cancer diagnosis. 10 whole years. It seems crazy being able to say that. I can't believe how quickly the time has gone though. And that scares me if I'm honest, as I'm not aware of anyone with this disease who has survived beyond another 10 years. I think I need to learn to be more grateful as in the early days I was hoping to make three years so I should be extremely grateful for having survived three times as long however it isn't enough.

The last few weeks have been hard as someone I met five years ago died. She also had ALK-positive lung cancer. She was an amazing person, young, beautiful on the inside and out and an incredible patient advocate. She lived life to the max and I was incredibly fond of her. Life can be very cruel at times. So why is she no longer with us yet I am?

We still have so much to learn about this disease despite the great advancements made in the treatments available over the past 10 years.

At the recent ALK Positive Lung Cancer Patient Conference, a Professor was describing his research in the field of ALK-positive lung cancer and I remember sitting there thinking about all the unsung heroes who spend their life in research. I owe my life to them.

So what have I learnt over the past 10 years? Well, I have learnt just how important it is to me to speak up for ALK+ (and everyone with lung cancer). Before my diagnosis, I was very happy being a wallflower, trying not to stand out from the crowd, always worried what people thought of me. And now? I've got over myself and now, doing the right thing for people with lung cancer is my priority.

The last 10 years has taught me that time goes so quickly so if you want to do something, you should just get on and do it and worry less about other people's opinions (when not sought). I have met some amazing people in the last 10 years and far too many of them are no longer here.

There is still so much to learn about this disease in order to truly overcome it, however I am more optimistic than ever when I hear about all the different strands of research being carried out today.

Remembering all my ALK friends, here or not, today as I appreciate the opportunity I have to keep advocating for the best treatments and care for everyone, everywhere ❤️ "

Thank you, Debra, for everything you do for our community, and for sharing your experiences so openly.

Itziar Canamasas, PhD Verified Profile 2ndItziar Canamasas, PhD • 2nd
Global Head of Oncology @ Boehringer Ingelheim | Committed to Cancer Breakthroughs | ex-Biotech CEO | Non-executive Director | NACD.DC®

10 years, and so much of it given to speaking up for others. **Debra**, your reflection holds the hardest truths about this disease and the hope that keeps the work going, side by side. Advocacy like yours is what connects the research to the people it's meant to serve, and it genuinely changes outcomes. Thank you for everything you give to this community!

Jane Woods 2ndJane Woods • 2nd
Beach based ADHD, cancer & leadership coach/facilitator. Inspiring individuals and teams to navigate change via blue health coaching and appreciative inquiry. Co-author of A CWH QuickStart Guide for Building Resilience.

If ever there was a person who embodied meaning and purpose, it's you Deb. Using your voice, that lovely Welsh voice, to push the science and outcomes for those in the ALK+ community, to push for more time, more care, more hope. Advocating for and empowering all those around you, including the very special young woman you mention. We all impact those around us whether we choose to or not. The decision we have is how we impact the world. Huge gratitude to you and for the sunshine smile of the young woman whose adventurous spirit lives on. … more