

Jo's Story



Jo and husband Tony

I started to get breathless in March 2015. I was doing a lot of rowing at the time in a double scull and was fairly fit. I went to the doctors and they said it may be asthma and gave me some puffers.

Three months on and no better, so went back and they sent me for a Xray. Something was then seen on my right lung and so quickly had CT scan, then PET scans and a biopsy.

Diagnosed with lung cancer in December 2015 at 45 years old and never smoked.

I had 4 rounds of chemotherapy Pemetrexed & Cisplatin starting in January 2016. Finally, the biopsy results came back and found I was ALK-positive, the chemotherapy had made no difference and had bad side effects, I was unable to work for a couple of months but then I started Crizotinib, a 1st generation TKI, in June 2016. I was able to go back to my full-time job as a garden centre manager and cope with the side effects.

After two years, I had some progression and so switched to Ceritinib, the first of the 2nd generation TKIs, and again continued in my full time job as a garden centre regional manager. In November 2018, I decided it was time give up work and enjoy my life and moved back to Whitstable in Kent, which is where I grew up. My husband Tony had already retired and had always said he wanted to move back to the seaside. We sold our house and paid off the mortgage and decided to rent and, as we don't have any children to leave anything to, we thought we would use the money to live on and enjoy ourselves.



Jo, Tony & friends
celebrating Burns Night

We still had family in Kent, my uncle lives in Whitstable, my step Mum and step sister live in Faversham, plus other friends locally.

It was lovely to be able to see more of them.

My brother lives in New Zealand and haven't seen him for 8 years.

It was the best decision we made and, as I have always loved water sports, I joined the local yacht club and this also helped me to get to know more people. I can be found most weekends out driving the safety boat for the dinghy sailors.

I have also taken on the role of Principal of the Training Centre at the club for the last 3 years, which involves helping on out RYA courses and running our cadet section.

This year, I have finally bought a sailing dinghy with a friend of mine, so we can go out for a cruise along the coast when the weathers good.

I also have a kayak, which I regularly go out on in the summer as we only live a 5 minute walk from the beach.



Jo and friends on the water

I got a rescue dog called Pip 3 years ago, and love walking my her on the beach each day.

I am coming up to nearly 6 years on Ceritinib and 8½ years since diagnosis, which when I was first told I had lung cancer they gave me 5 years.



Thankfully, the drugs are doing their job and the latest results are all stable, so I can continue to enjoy my life to the full.

Just because you get a cancer diagnosis doesn't mean you can't live life to the full.

Jo Wyles
May 2024