



★ **Brittany Harris** ★  
Successful ... — CANCER —  
**SURVIVOR**

**B**rittany Harris graduated high school, landed a job and enrolled in college. But sometimes an unexpected illness can put an immediate halt on a bright start. That is certainly not the case with Brittany Harris. At age 19, Brittany was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

After finishing high school, Brittany enrolled in the nursing program at UCC while working full time. One day she began to experience itching in her ears which progressed during the year to chronic itching all over her body. "My primary care physician began with allergy testing but my blood tests indicated something else was going on. My white blood count was elevated and I had developed lumps from the

base of my brain to the top of my diaphragm. I was quickly referred to Dr. Schriener, who reviewed my CT scan and scheduled a biopsy the next day to remove a lymph node for testing. Within a week I was diagnosed with stage two Hodgkin's Lymphoma. It all happened pretty quickly" Brittany explained.

Brittany said, "In my first appointment with Dr. Williams, he spent over three hours with me explaining what to expect and reviewing treatment options followed by a surprise bone marrow biopsy, which was scary, but not as bad as I feared."

The following week was filled with six doctor appointments in five days. She began treatment the next week and was one of the first patients to be treated in the newly constructed Community Cancer Center facility. Brittany's treatment plan included 8-16 weeks of Chemo followed by 16 radiation treatments.

"After my first chemo treatment the itching became a thousand times worse, unbearable. My Mom was by my side. She walked with me at 2 a.m. in the cool night air and then gently rubbed my legs all night long. From my discussions with Dr. Williams I was aware that the itching might get worse before it got better and that is exactly what happened." Brittany recalled.

The chemotherapy was beginning to take effect. After a few more treatments, Brittany's itching began to heal. Yet the experience caused extreme nausea, loss of her hair and sometimes coherent memory loss directly after a treatment. At the halfway point, eight weeks of chemo, Brittany learned that she would need to continue chemo for another eight weeks. "I looked at my PET scan and could see my body was still infected. That feeling was more emotional for me than my original diagnosis." She said.

Before going to her final chemo treatment Brittany made up a sign that read I Love Denise & Kim, which she took with her to the Cancer Center. While cuddled up in her blankets, Dr. Williams stopped by and teasingly remarked "Hey aren't you forgetting someone on your sign?" "No way, you are the one making me do this. But, I'll make a deal with you." She said with a wry grin.

Brittany was quite nervous meeting with Dr. Williams to review her PET scan results, but she was also prepared. Dr. Williams informed her "That's it you're done, you don't have to do anymore treatments." Elated, Brittany flipped around a sandwich board she had made which read Dr. Williams Is The Best. Brittany exclaimed "I was so happy. I walked every floor of the Cancer Center with my sandwich board and then marched the sidewalk in front of the building wearing my sign telling everyone how great Dr. Williams is. Pretty soon reporters from the paper and TV stations showed up. We made it fun and worth celebrating"

With chemo in the review mirror, Brittany was now faced with completing her treatment plan with radiation therapy. She was feeling much better and highly tempted to forego radiation, as it was her decision to make. Radiation therapy meant facing 16 days of treatments Monday through Friday and another bout with nausea. After weighing the risks and taking counsel from her oncology team Brittany scheduled her first radiation treatment.

On October 16, 2009 Brittany concluded her radiation treatments. She was so overjoyed, she made a cake and signs for the radiation oncology staff to thank them.

When asked about the quality of care she received, Brittany remarked, "I'm glad I didn't go out of town for treatment. It was much more convenient and I don't believe I would have received any better care. The Community Cancer Center is phenomenal. It does not really feel like a doctor's office, it feels more like a family."

Today, Brittany is fully recovered and a loving mother to her son Cameron. Please join us in wishing Brittany well in celebrating her sixth year of being cancer free on October 16, 2015.

