Chemotherapy Notes: → Light in the Valley of Life (7-29-2021) Shi Ergang

The cancerous tissue just grows on the pylorus at the bottom of the stomach, almost blocking the digestive tract leading from the stomach to the small intestine. Food accumulates in the stomach and the pain is unbearable. That's why I went to the emergency room over a month ago and was diagnosed with stomach cancer a few days later. After that I could only eat a clear liquid diet. I am looking forward to the chemo that will start in a few days. Looking forward to the chemotherapy as soon as possible to destroy the cancerous tissue, open the stomach door, so that I can get a normal supply of nutrients.

Unexpectedly, the sky is unpredictable. This day, I accidentally drank a drink with bubbles and a few pieces of watermelon that should not be eaten. As a result, the abdomen was painful in the middle of the night, and it was useless to take painkillers. Wake up your sleeping wife and call 911. My wife reassured me, don't worry, we will find a way. I fell to my knees in pain and saw her legs shaking. The police and paramedics came and we got into the ambulance to the emergency room of a nearby hospital. Time, 3 am. The pain of tearing

flesh made me unable to shut my mouth and kept shouting. A shot of morphine had no effect, followed by another shot, which was slightly better. CT diagnosis: gastric perforation. Need emergency surgery. I was immediately taken by ambulance to the Surgical ICU of the General Hospital in Manhattan. His wife was always by his side. She later recalled that I told her twice in Chinese in the emergency room, "I didn't expect death to come so fast."

During these hours, she has been calling friends for advice and help. There was no good so lution for everyone, except for comfort, they said: Let us pray to God. The emergency room medical staff also rushed to get in touch with my gastric cancer attending physician and sur geon. Can't get in touch. No way seems to work. Had to wait for the inevitable surgery. A stomach with cancer at the bottom is like a time bomb. If you are not careful, the vulnerable parts will perforate the stomach due to inappropriate food, causing various molds in the stomach to leak into the peritoneum, causing life-threatening situations. Surgery is necessary for rescue. Once the operation was performed, the surgeon would "by the way" remove my stomach cancer. If this is done, the planned treatment plan, chemotherapy -surgery- chemotherapy, will be put on hold. It's like a train of life that was about to leave was unfortunately missed. Statistically, this will be very bad for my healing.

I was lying on the hospital bed, feeling like I was walking alone in the valley of the shadow of death ... I looked at the bright sunshine outside the window, the vibrant world, and in my

heart there was a kind of regret, gloom, inexplicable fear and confusion about the future. Am I really on a dead end? Amazingly, a few hours after I was hospitalized, the excruciating pain subsided. After one night, without any medication, my vital signs were normal. The ward doctor said you don't look like a perforated stomach. The contrast X-ray diagnostic of the day also showed that my stomach was not "leaking" at the moment. As a result, I was "released" and went home two days later. But only on a clear liquid diet.

Soon, the attending physician for gastric cancer had a video exchange with my wife and I. She said that after reading the diagnostic film of my gastric perforation, she also carefully observed the lymph nodes near my cancer with the experts, which showed that my tumor was more serious than she expected... (I didn't fully understand what she meant at the time). She thought it was a micro perforation in the stomach. The planned treatment regimen

should be started as soon as possible. And decided to give me an immunoglobulin drug, Nivo, which was just approved by the FDA in April this year and is dedicated to gastric This drug is also recommended by a friend who works at the FDA. I'm speechless with excitement about this better solution than the original plan. The wife reminded that there must be God's hand at work in this series of events. I burst into tears

In the days to come, the blindness and naivety of my optimism and positivity will be more indifferent. In the dead of night, I feel a vague and chaotic excitement, and a slightly reluc tant expectation that is not far or near, that is my last days. Death, the last stop in life that everyone must go through, seems to be a very distant thing. In a busy life, the temptation of various desires, the endless chase, that life has to get off the last stop. Death, it seems, never has a chance to have a clear and real place in consciousness. I've actually always liked the topic of "death", it's one of the most fundamental issues in life. I even think that **all the core issues of life are tied to it. Death is like a gloomy and bottomless treasure from which those who have the heart will surely dig out the treasure of life**. Looking back, I thought about death as a bystander. It's different now, I can see it clearly. I know it's by my side be cause I'm walking in the valley of the shadow of death. If I'm not careful, I'll bump into it at any time.

Lying in bed, feeling the current situation of my life in the quiet darkness. I saw that I was groping my way through the dark valley of life. French printmaker Gustave Dore based on the immortal work of Dante (Donte Alighieri, The Divine Comedy) in the Renaissance. The road traveler in the middle of the road, in the darkness like the road and not the road, looks back and looks forward, with spark-like courage, and the fear of the inexplicable danger ahead, exploring and moving forward.

Gustave Dore. I carefully observe the road ahead. Occasionally there is a bleak moan from afar in the silent valley. There is also an uneasy feeling that the earth trembles slightly. I found something that seemed to be a road, and there was something disturbing hidden behind it. Some places that are intuitively believed to be a road, and they are about to enter by feeling, but the result is likely to be a dead end. I remember that when I was diagnosed with stomach cancer, I was taken by ambulance to the gastric surgery ward at the Manhattan General Hospital on the same day. The director of the surgery department and several assistants were busy with the laparoscopy surgery for gastric cancer resection, which was to be performed the next day. Although I felt that this "arranged" decision was justified, I also felt uneasy and felt that it was too fast. A couple who are doctors in the church learned about my situation when my wife asked by phone, and suggested that it is best not to do the surgery right away. I took this advice. During nearly an hour of intense discussion during which the at tending doctor and his surgical partner insisted repeatedly on the operation, due to my firmness and thanks to their sincerity, they finally agreed to let me out of the hospital and wait for my final decision. That afternoon, the couple drove me to the hospital to pick me up in the most difficult traffic situation in Manhattan. The true status of the cancer often takes time to be more clearly identified. Looking back, if I did have surgery, my life would have been cut off for years.

My wife and I faced a lot of life-threatening choices with this sudden onset of cancer. And every time before a choice must be made, all parties have the opinions and reasons of experts, their own real-time reading and research and thinking after carefully distinguishing the pros and cons, friends' pertinent suggestions and live personal experience Just like in the next **life In chess, the opponent is time, that is, the god of death, which often makes people keep playing chess**. It is like trying desperately to get out of the terrifying valley of life, when suddenly there are several choices that seem to be paths at the corner, the heart that must make a choice is both excited and anxious. Now that I think about it, I realize that there is no perfect choice, but there is one in every choice. In fact, every wise choice has something deep life wisdom in it.

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Some kind-hearted friends and the attending doctor of the general hospital all believed that I had to go through a gastric tube to maintain the nutrients my body needed during chemo therapy. As a result, after being reminded by another friend who has extensive cancer medical experience, I refused to insert a gastric tube and insisted on using my natural digestive mechanism ("relying on the sky to eat" is the best), and finally survived until the bright moment when my stomach opened. What makes me more gratified is that my weight has been increasing day by day since t h e n.

Which hospital system should I choose for my gastric cancer treatment? Manhattan, which is not far from my home, has a world-class cancer center, a medical school of a world-class university, and several well-

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known specialty hospitals, including the general hospital of the aforementioned local hospital in Manhattan. Through friends and church friends, I entered that world-class cancer center and had the privilege of being in charge of all my oncology treatments by a very experienced medical team. But frustratingly, when I was in the midst of a perforated stomach and needed to make a decision, First responders couldn't get in touch with the medical team doctor at that cancer center for 24 hours. Later, even if the information came, it was not clear what to do. Perhaps, separated by the hospital system, legal procedures, and limited information transmission in a short period of time, the other party has all kinds of guesses, so he cannot make a decisive decision. In this particular case, I developed a sense of disappointment with the medical team at that cancer center. Coupled with the sincere suggestion of a friend, I decided to let the chief surgeon of the surgical depart ment in my hospital perform the resection. Thinking about it now, it was a very unwise de cision. What surprised me was that even the attending doctor who had always advocated surgery, after hearing my new decision, advised me to be cautious. From his tone, he had great admiration for the two attending physicians in my medical team. I am very grateful to this conscientious doctor for this. After about a day or two, I was finally able to have a video chat (mentioned at the beginning of the article) with my wife and I, the attending gas tric cancer physician on that cancer center medical team, to get me back on the right track. A close friend with liver cancer decided for convenience reasons to have his cancer treated by the medical school at a world-class university in Manhattan. In the last days, due to insufficient monitoring procedures in the hospital, the blood was infected with fungus and could not be detected and controlled in time, resulting in death of sepsis. The hospital knew the mistake and did not charge the final medical fee. I am deeply saddened and sorry for the untimely death of a good friend. This close-up example proves how important an experienced treatment system is.

Looking back on that period, from whether to perform surgery first, how to choose the most suitable hospital, to the second choice of surgery due to an accidental gastric perforation in cident and the twists and turns of choosing a hospital, I am surprised to find that some of the factors are human. Uncontrollable. For example, the wonderful "self-healing" after gas tric perforation occurs. Another example is when I changed my mind and asked for surgery, the same doctor went from the first insistence to the second tactful rejection (a dangerous fork in the valley of my life). For another example, the attending doctor took the initiative to give me a more effective immunotherapy protein drug (Nivo) after seeing my gastric perforation film, and changed the way I had decided to participate in a phase III clinical trial so that I could use the drug that has not yet been used. FDA-approved new protein drug for immunotherapy (anti-PD L1). A clinical trial has a control group and I would only have a 50% chance of using the drug itself. These wonderful arrangements are impossible for humans to do. I looked back at the road I walked in the valley of life. I seem to have been lucky enough to "dodge" some dangerous crossroads. What did all this mean? I was surprised to find that I was not walking alone in the valley of the shadow of death. Everyone learned about my can cer After the situation, many families extended their sincere hands. Many couples came to visit their homes with precious nutritional supplements or spiritual gifts. Each visit had in- depth life exchanges and sincere prayers and encouragement to each other. This is something I have rarely experienced before. Every time I pick up the delicious soup made by the brothers and sisters in the church, big tears fall into the soup ... God's eternity that travels through time and space The love from the believers was sent to my house through the hands of the believers, like a trickle in my heart. They also sent me beautiful chants to encourage and comfort me. One of the girls sang the song: "When You Believe". Every day I can't stop listening to that song that I can never hear enough. Every time I listen to it, I can't control my tears, the emotion in my heart, the strong belief in overcoming cancer, the notes of love that last forever in my life It reverberated in my heart. The sincere prayers of the brothers and sisters in the church, the countless acts of love, their wisdom and experience in life, and the constant encouragement of my relatives and friends did not illuminate my heart and me like a light. The road ahead?

I am well aware that my life may be very limited. It makes me value it even more. Experience, taste, and "chew" it more zesty. Thinking back to the nearly two months since my cancer diagnosis went into chemotherapy, what was really valuable, something that would give me strength and light up my life? The first thing that jumped into my mind was to **bravely face the "reality" of my life. No matter how ugly it is, how ugly it is, how reluctant you are to face it, you have to keep your eyes on it, face it and accept it completely. And the sooner and more direct the better. In doing so, you stand in the "real". This is actually a beautiful, deeply peaceful state. Those 37 trillion cells in your body are inspired by your bravery** 化疗手记(续):生命幽谷中的光|史尔钢

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and honesty. Because they are where your life force is, the reality of that life. I think this is the first step towards a brighter life and ultimately deep satisfaction.

The next step is to face the unknown with great interest and enthusiasm, any new things, new realities, that you have to face in your life. Don't hesitate to put your foot in it bravely. You will find that as long as you get into practice, there is a way. It is much more effective than thinking about it for a long time. Learning from failure is normal and necessary. I find that being able to focus on "learning by doing" is the most interesting thing in life. It develops you, inspires you ... and before you know it, you grow into a newer, stronger you. In fact, this is the most vital and most advanced activity in life. Man is a phe nomenon that requires deep consciousness and is constantly growing. Why not maximize the growth in exploring and practicing new things, and then get the greatest pleasure?

The next step is to always look at the world with a "big me" heart and see the me every day. On the surface, each of us is doing our own thing every day. In fact, none of us are inseparable from each other . What I have experienced during this cancer chemotherapy has made me deeply aware of the grace that others have brought to me for helping me, an unforgettable life help. I found that in the midst of adversity, people can have a deeper understanding and resonance between people, and then achieve a deep spiritual satisfaction. But at the same time, you have to do your homework. At every fork in the road, in the face of all kinds of information and suggestions from friends, I tried my best to study, distinguish, ponder and ask. I have found that these efforts are also essential.

Finally, **people need a transcendence, a transcendence spirit**. That is, **from an infinite and eternal perspective, to see one's own limited life**. In the twentieth century, it is recognized as the most important mathematical achievement, Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems, from the highest level of human rationality, mathematically, undeniably proves that no system of existence can exist independently and self-completely. Rather, it must be connected to the infinite outside world. It completely overturns the dream, represented by Bertrand Russell, of trying to encapsulate all existence (whether objective or ideological) in a single mathematical logic system. Gödel's mathematics discovered that the deepest mys tery of nature, like a lightning bolt in the dark night, makes human reason finally clearly see the limits of reason itself. And so that one can finally see with certainty the infinite cognitive process, the light that leads to eternity. Being able to connect your limited self with eternity, and being able to deeply believe, pursue, explore and long for, I think is the most precious thing in life. Jesus Christ is the jewel of my life.

Cancer was unexpectedly, relentlessly, and wonderfully connected to my life. It also gave

me new experiences, experiences and observations about life. Every time I go to the treatment center, I can't help but watch and feel my fellows. Everyone is experiencing this life- threatening disease caused by cellular "derailment". I looked around, some bowed their heads in contemplation, some had dull expressions, some were reading peacefully, some were chatting quietly with their family members, and some were putting cookies in their mouths and chewing slowly. Everyone has their own story. A woman who was 30 away sat diagonally opposite , and a pair of very divine eyes quickly exchanged glances with me. The corners of his eyes were sharp. A generous veil covered the long stripped hair. I think she must have been a beautiful and attractive lady before she got sick. She tilted her head and tucked her phone, fiddling with her nails while talking. From her voice, she was arguing with the other party about something. The nurse called her name and she stood up and turned to speak to the nurse. I looked at her back. I was very sad to see her skinny body.

The second time I was hospitalized in the emergency department, my patient John, two years ago, was transferred to the oral cavity due to laryngeal cancer. High-intensity radio therapy resulted in necrosis of a bone in the upper jaw of the oral cavity, affecting the oral function. Doctors had to remove a bone from his left foot to replace it. I watched his cancer- altered face, the left upper jaw open and an esophagus leading directly into the stomach. I said to John's wife that he must have been handsome when he was young. She said yes. John still looked toned, tall, muscular, and I couldn't believe his tragic battle with cancer without looking at his face and the metal device on his left foot. John was speechless, lying on the hospital bed watching the ongoing European Cup football match. Every now and then he

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nods and smiles at me. Before leaving the hospital, I said goodbye to him, thumbs up in both hands, and a gleam of determined victory on his face.

A few days ago, my wife and I came to Manhattan for the third injection of chemotherapy (usually I do it at the local branch). I knew in my heart that when I came to this hospital this time, the doctor must have something to discuss with me. I was both excited and disturbed. Her first sentence when she saw me was, "Your therapeutic effect exceeded my expectations". "As for your tumor, there are signs of metastasis in the lymphatic pox adjacent to the tumor in the stomach, but no metastasis has been found in the adjacent liver. To be precise, you have mild stage 4 gastric cancer. I still think there is hope for a cure. Give you a few more chemo before considering surgery."

My heart froze halfway. I feel that death is really not far away from me. The next big question is what type of tumor I have. There are basically two types of gastric cancer: one is hereditary diffuse gastric cancer (HDGC) positive for CDH1 (protein name) mutation; the second is metastatic HER2 negative. HER2 (protein name). The former has better prospects and may achieve longer progression-free survival; the latter is much worse, with an average survival of one to two years. I asked again, how long will it take to know the result? Answer, about two months. My heart hangs again. Could it be my "decision day" in two months?

With hope, confusion, anxiety and excitement, I wandered in the valley of the shadow of death. I remembered playing chess with my son a few days ago, saying that I had not played for a long time, and I forgot the rules. My son encouraged me. The exit was good, and he killed half of his son's troops with a few good moves. My "car" and "rear" are approaching his king. I was calculating how to deal the fatal blow to the opponent. However, I forgot to take care of the rear, his "car" unexpectedly froze my army.

I wonder if life can also be seen as playing a game of chess. The opponent is time, and

that is your death. You are playing a game of chess with your own god of death, your own unprecedented life. What is the goal? In my opinion, it is you who have explored and de cided step by step, and worked hard to make arrangements, and finally reached your unique survival combination step by step, your enthusiasm, talent, learning and cognitive ability, judgment and action ability. Combination, exercise your unique social function and get a deep satisfaction and pleasure from it. I think once you reach this state, you can face your own death at any time. This means that you have won the game of life. This is just my definition. The connotation and standard of winning obviously vary from person to person. Your heart and your body's 37 trillion cells will tell you if you're on the right path in life.

I was sitting in the dark, looking out the window at the stars, thinking about my life that might not be too long, and I felt really peaceful. I can always face my opponent, my death. I also hope that I can have a little more time and have the opportunity to grow into a better version of myself. Cough, human desires are endless, and time is limited. I long for the hand of God to take me out of this valley of the shadow of death.

The open Bible on the table, Psalm 23 took me to that night more than 3,000 years ago. In order to avoid the pursuit of his enemies, King David was trapped in the desert, sitting on a stone, plucking the strings of the lyre, watching the sunset, and sang the beautiful and affectionate song with faith and love for God. Poetry also truly expresses my heart:

"The LORD is my shepherd, and I shall not want. He made me

lie down in green pastures.

lead me beside still waters; He revives

my soul.

Guide me in the path of righteousness for my own name. Though I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no harm, for you are with

me.

Your rod, your rod, comfort me.

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You have prepared a banquet for me in the presence of my enemies. You anointed my head with oil; my cup overflowed.

All the days of my life there will be grace, and mercy will follow me; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. "I cried out to God and said, "God, I hear the voice of your servant David. I am convinced that your hand will bring me out of the valley of the shadow of death. Please forgive my sins. please bless me. The path that leads my life. Because you are my shepherd, I shall not want. Amen.