This is the seventeenth newsletter in a series of ONCORG Community Conversations. They're focused on relationships between doctors and patients, and the complexity of treating cancer.

November 2026 – Tumor with Humor



Rodney Thomas is a senior officer working for ONCORG, INC, headquartered in Mt. Laurel, NJ. ONCORG was developed as a comprehensive cancer support service for those seeking a first or second opinion for their cancer.

Mr. Thomas is a military veteran who served eight years in the USAF. He also spent eleven years in the automotive industry, ten years in healthcare and eight years with Apple Inc. supporting customer needs.

Tumor with Humor

One of our avid ONCORG followers Ramendra Kumar shared his personal survivorship. He was diagnosed with colon cancer, followed by four major surgeries, several rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, and spent 40 days in the ICU. He has a permanent colostomy bag, an insulin pump and other health challenges. Today his remarkable spirit and 'fire' is unmatched, and his story is inspiration for this month's message.

Kumar's life will never be the name. He has a new normalcy. He has a remarkable inner strength he never knew he had. Adversity does that to us – we find that inner strength we never knew we had. Aside from the support he received from his family and friends, he realized we are all vulnerable beings, and life is temporary. More importantly, we should celebrate every day because each day is a gift. Kumar's message to all of us was simple:

- Don't take yourself too seriously. Try to see the ridiculous in the sublime.
- A sense of humor can make even the most difficult situations a little easier to bear.
- Pursue a passion. It can be music, painting, gardening, reading, cooking et al. Occupy your mind with productive activities. It will help prevent negative thoughts and anxieties from invading your space.
- Build relationships and strengthen old relationships.
- Live in the moment and be optimistic.

Think of cancer as a journey. Humor is a buffer against psychological and physiological stress during our cancer survivorship. Humor and laughter are some of our best weapons in our arsenal to decrease anxiety. It helps to not feel overwhelmed and avoid cycles of depression. This is not, easy but it is a 'life' practice.

Aside from the mental and emotional benefits, you might be surprised by how laughter and humor can affect your physical well-being. Let's discuss this a bit.
This link provides some very good information about how laughter and humor improves the human physiological during https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10204943/

Laughter and humor are miraculous medicines. One of my articles describes laughter as an expression of humor and has been recognized as a *good medicine* for centuries, a concept consistent with human neurodevelopment.

Here's something worthwhile. Research shows that mirthful laughter can **stimulate and activate existing T-cells** and other immune cells like natural killer (NK) cells. This caught my attention more than any other characteristic pertaining to laughter. Why? Because there is conclusive evidence indicating how humor is tied to fighting cancer.

Aside from inspiring NK cells, laughter causes a drop in cortisol and epinephrine, calming frayed nerves and reducing physical tension. It stimulates the release of natural endorphins, which can elevate pain thresholds and make discomfort feel more manageable. And it also supports immune function to fight and protect against daily threats such as common cold, flu, viruses or infections. The immune system helps with healing injuries, managing inflammation and repairing damage cells.

A Disclaimer

While humor is a valuable resource, it must be used in a sensible manner. It is not about forcing positivity or invalidating genuine grief. Inappropriate or poorly timed jokes—such as when breaking severe bad news—can misfire, meaning humor works best when it is led or welcomed by the patient's own readiness.

My Personal Experience

Furthermore, as a cancer survivor, I know the importance of good friends and relationships, staying as fit as possible, and never being 'down.' Although cancer can be fatiguing, and rest is necessary, prolonged inactivity leads to 'deconditioning.' I knew how to take care of my body during my cancer journey. I walked several miles per day, lifted weights and was grateful for the wonderful care I had. I drummed as many friends as possible to go on walks or work out at the gym. Don't decondition if you can help it.

This is Commander Rodney Thomas, signing off for today. Be safe out there.

Rodney Thomas

Rodney Thomas

ONCORG – Chief Communication Officer