

# “I felt more confident” dealing with breast cancer



“When you’re diagnosed with cancer, you’re completely overwhelmed and you’re not sure where to go for resources,” says Kara, an employee of The Hartford, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2018. “You’re stuck in this whirlwind,” Kara continued. “You’re meeting with four different doctors, when you barely had to see a doctor before. It all comes at you so quickly.” Kara had already begun chemotherapy when her diagnosis appeared in a January claims report and ConsumerMedical called.

“(My Nurse Ally) and I had an initial conversation, and she introduced herself,” says Kara. “She offered to send information on my diagnosis and doctors, and the chance to talk to a surgeon.” Kara was grateful to be offered information and support she felt she was missing. She had intentionally avoided information online, therefore “it was nice to have something where I could trust the information coming to me.”

ConsumerMedical sent Kara curated research on her specific type of breast cancer, credentials on her doctors, and diet recommendations to help with the side effects of chemotherapy. Kara’s Nurse Ally also arranged a conference call with a ConsumerMedical Physician Ally and experienced surgeon. “She gave me a feel for what to expect from treatment and surgery, and what was going to happen,” says Kara.

## Breast Cancer

*Breast cancer is the second most common U.S. diagnosis after skin cancer in women. Breast cancer is treatable, often using radiation and/or hormone therapy. Common surgeries are lumpectomy (partial breast removal) and mastectomy (whole breast removal).*

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“That was really helpful. I had become lactose intolerant, and I was trying to figure out what foods to avoid. Your immune system is weakened, and you want to avoid getting sick.” Kara began avoiding things harder to digest, like dairy, cheeses and processed foods.

Kara ultimately remained with her oncology doctors, and the call with the surgeon confirmed her recommended treatment path. “There was no reason to change it,” she says. “I felt more confident.” Kara agrees that knowledge is power. “I felt armed with information when I went to see my doctors because I had a higher comfort level with what was going on with my body.”

In addition to the medical information, “my Nurse Ally was extremely empathetic,” says Kara. “It was so helpful to have that caring person on the phone who understands how extremely awful it is to deal with cancer. The experience is so overwhelming, just trying to understand what you’ve been told. Everybody uses science jargon, and sometimes you need it explained in simple terms.” ConsumerMedical helped to relieve her anxiety.

Reflecting on her experience, “I wish I had paid closer attention during open enrollment,” says Kara. She recalls seeing information on ConsumerMedical, but when she read the service helps with things like knee surgery or hysterectomy, she thought, “That’s not me. I’m never going to need that.” She feels like she lost a couple months of valuable support.

Kara worked with ConsumerMedical for about five months as she prepared for surgery and had about a dozen interactions via phone and home mailings. Now Kara wants to share her story to help others. “I didn’t realize how valuable it would be for me, and I wish I had reached out sooner. It’s really nice having a resource where you’re getting information based on science and you can continue to receive information and support as you get your treatments. I recommend ConsumerMedical to anyone going through cancer or any type of illness.”

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