

Quality Of Life Case Study

Eve Howard: Age 42



Introduction



I was diagnosed with bowel cancer and liver metastasis two years ago. I had been experiencing frequent and very loose bowel movements for some months but attributed this to my high fibre diet. This was followed by a period of constipation and bleeding so I knew something was seriously wrong.

With two cases of bowel cancer in my family I knew I needed an urgent colonoscopy. As a mother with two young children, and running a busy marketing consultancy, my number one priority was, and still is, being here to support my children growing up.

My medical team recommended six rounds of chemotherapy via a Hickman Line followed by 28 sessions of external beam radiotherapy and chemotherapy together. Last year, I underwent a low anterior bowel resection and loop ileostomy. Four months later I had a liver resection followed by three months of adjuvant chemotherapy in tablet form.

The treatment happened pretty quickly so there was little time to dwell on it, plus I had my business and home to run. However, as anyone who has had a cancer diagnosis will agree, life seems to be permanently shrouded in a veil that you can't escape.

Chemotherapy comes with a range of sometimes quite scary side effects and it was really important that I kept my medical team up to date on these events so that my dose could be amended if necessary. I was delighted that my neoadjuvant therapy was successful.

However, once the reality sank in, my mind went into strategy mode (much like a marathon training programme). I knew that whilst my surgical and oncological teams would be managing the cancer treatment, I would be the one dealing with the daily manifestations of recovering from major surgery and chemotherapy as well as the challenges of being a stoma owner.

In the nine months between diagnosis and bowel surgery I did an awful lot of Googling and YouTubeing. So, whilst I felt so clued up that I think I could have performed the surgery myself, what I had not banked on, was just how many stoma pouches my stoma nurse and I would have to source to find 'The One'.

The reason for this is that I have a long-term allergy to latex and other sticky substances so fixing the pouches securely to my skin was a complex issue.

Product Selection

I felt lucky that my surgery was pre-planned, so my new physique and bodily functions did not come as too much of a shock. However, although I was aware of my allergies, I was not prepared for just how many pouches would not agree with my skin-type and body shape.

It was a soul-destroying experience, on top of everything else that I was handling. The only positive outcome was that the irritation was so consuming that for a brief moment in time, it stopped me thinking about the cancer.

From Day One on the hospital ward, I tried to stay strong and positive and I cleaned and changed my own pouch. Psychologically I did not let it get to me. I had planned to tell my children, aged four and six at the time, that it was a giant plaster to help Mummy's tummy get better. And, whilst I knew that due to my allergies, I was likely to be allergic to some of the adhesive barriers, what I had not envisaged was so many 'explosions' as well.

Some things are simply not discussed at pre-op and I had not even anticipated that this might happen. It was barely on my radar, yet it is a hugely debilitating thing to keep happening and really affected my confidence and ability to carry out my usual tasks.

Empowered as I was to cope with my stoma, the feeling of desperation that every pouch I tried would either irritate my skin or leak at the most inopportune moment, was a big blow!

My stoma nurse went out of her way to source different pouches based on my specific needs, with varying degrees of success. To begin with, I used one-piece pouches but the level of irritation I experienced was akin to being poked with hundreds of needles all over the baseplate area, which triggered a tightening of my chest, almost like anaphylaxis! I experienced this within five seconds of applying the pouch. Sometimes I could only stand it for fifteen minutes before ripping it off and applying various accessories, or even just jumping in the shower sans-pouch and massaging the area with warm water.

“ It is no exaggeration to say that the Dansac NovaLife TRE pouch has changed my life! ”

Intervention

In desperation, I went back on YouTube and found a lady in a similar situation who had experienced irritation within minutes of applying various pouches. She was now using the Dansac NovaLife TRE one piece barrier and this was a success for her.. I immediately contacted my stoma nurse and asked if I could trial this product.

I was instantly impressed by the NovaLife TRE convex barrier as it was so thin and pliable that it adhered to all the contours of my body. In addition, if any output leaked onto my skin, the barrier is designed with pH buffering to help manage the skin-damaging effects of digestive enzyme activity. I found that any broken skin appeared to visually improve within one day of wearing the NovaLife TRE convex barrier and without the need for any additional accessories. I cannot even feel that I am wearing the pouch which is amazing. And for me, the icing on the cake is that this product is made without the use of animal based ingredients. Truly TRE-mendous as this is something very important to me.

One issue, however, remained. As I have a small stoma, my barrier sometimes became unstuck towards my belly button area, which causes a leak. Luckily, I happened to meet a Dansac representative at a Stoma Day who advised me to switch to the Dansac NovaLife TRE 1 piece barrier, as this has a smaller barrier footprint and would avoid the natural dip on my tummy. Furthermore, I could also use the TRE seal to create an additional foundation for the barrier to adhere to. I now happily use both products with great success.

Impact

Whilst still not 100% infallible, the Dansac NovaLife TRE 1 piece barrier has hugely alleviated the leakage problem. I can now get approximately two days of comfortable wear from my pouch as opposed to a few very uncomfortable hours. In fact, my peristomal skin looks so healthy that it puts the rest of my body to shame! As an added bonus, I also need fewer products than before which makes the whole process much simpler.

It is no exaggeration to say this pouch has changed my life. Having a pouch that I can trust and feel comfortable wearing is so important to my quality of life.

Once my treatment is over, I plan to volunteer and help other ostomates on their own stoma journeys.

Key Learnings

- Talk regularly to your stoma nurse as your body will change frequently in the weeks following surgery
- Research ostomy products and explore with your nurse what may fit with your individual needs
- Keep positive and talk to your stoma nurse if you are feeling overwhelmed or experiencing any issues

About Dansac NovaLife TRE

Living with a stoma does not have to mean accepting peristomal skin complications. Helping the skin around the stoma stay healthy goes a long way in enhancing the quality of people's lives.

The **Dansac NovaLife TRE** ostomy barrier is designed to help keep skin naturally healthy with 3 levels of protection: **Adhesion, Absorption and pH Balance.**

The best skin is healthy skin.

For more information contact your local representative.



Stoma
Skin
Soul