Let’s do a quick recap.

August 20th - Routine colonoscopy because I’m 51. Find a lesion. Sent to lab for testing

August 22nd - Doctor calls and says “It is cancer.”

August 29th - Take wife to US Open in NYC for our 25th anniversary because doctor said it was ok to go.

September 14th - Get colon resection surgery to remove cancer and part of my colon.

September 17th - Told by surgeon it is Stage 3 cancer and I will need to see an oncologist.

September 25th - Meet Dr Mendoca, my oncologist. She says, “You are a very lucky man.”

October 18th - Get PET Scan (Positron Emission Tomography w/ radioactive sugar water!)

October 19th - Get Power Port installed in my left chest.

That brings me to today. October 23rd. My first of 12 therapy treatments to rid my body of cancer. I know it is “chemotherapy”. I also know everyone calls it “chemo”. I am choosing to use the other part of the word and call it “therapy”. Why not?

Cindy and I arrived at the doctor’s office for my 10am appointment. First, we meet with Dr Mendonca. She confirms the PET scan did not show anything abnormal, which is good. A quick look at my surgery scars and we head on over to the “lounge”. It is filled with patients. One woman is knitting. Another woman is sleeping. Many are reading. I do not see a single laptop, until mine comes out of the backpack. Really good wifi and lot’s of power. It will be easy to get a lot of work done here.

As a newbie, it’s easy to spot the veterans. They arrive, grab a seat, and easily strike up a conversation with the nurses. That will be me soon. The nurses here are awesome. They sit and visit patients, discussing their treatment or asking how their family is doing. I am going to like it here.

Diane, one of the nurses, comes over to say hi and get my therapy started. A special needle is jabbed through my chest into the port. Just a little pinch and it’s in. Cool. I will have this connected to the port in my chest for 48 hours. More on that later.

First, I receive a couple different medications to help with nausea. After that, it’s time for part one of my cocktail. It’s a combination of oxaliplatin and leucovorin. It takes a couple hours for this part of the treatment.

Part two has to be infused slowly, that’s why I have to stay connected for 48 hours. It is a drug called 5-FU (Fluorouacil). This requires a pump or “party ball” as the nurses call it to be installed. This rubber ball will be attached and pump 5ml an hour into me until empty. Cindy and I are still trying to come up with the right way to carry this around. One suggestion, from Lou in Idaho, is to get a chalk bag from REI. These are used by rock climbers and they connect to your belt and are the perfect size for the pump. Lou knows this because she went through the exact same therapy treatment a few years ago and is still cancer free. Two days later, I return to the office to have the empty party ball removed.

The above therapy will happen 11 more times. Every other week until we are done. It looks like I will get a break Thanksgiving week as no one will be around on Thanksgiving Day to remove my party ball. I’m fine with the week off.

The toughest part of therapy is yet to come. I’ve discussed the side effects with Dr Mendonca and the nurses in the lounge. No hair loss, but maybe some thinning. I can handle that. Possible nausea but with today’s meds, it is totally controllable. Neuropathy is highly likely. Tingling, numbness, sensitivity to cold or even pain in the hands, feet, arms and legs are the main symptoms of neuropathy. There is also an overall malaise that many people experience on this regimen. Everyone is different. I like knowing what may or may not happen. I also believe a positive attitude can make a difference.

It really is a simple choice.

Like choosing to call my treatment therapy.