In last month's post, I described my feelings and experience when you hear the news that the diagnosis is cancer. Since then, I have had a colon resection, or in regular speak, they cut out about 5 inches of my colon to remove the affected area, and then re-attached the two ends. Colon is good as new.

Below is my top ten list of takeaways as a surgery noob. Yep, 51 years old and I have never been admitted to a hospital. For some of you, my list may seem obvious. For any surgery virgins out there, keep this list handy for your inevitable first time.

Ten. The surgical staff at Banner Desert Hospital is awesome!
I have no other staff to compare my surgery and recovery crew to, but I can't imagine there is a better team out there. From check-in to pre-op to recovery, they were amazing.

Nine. Let the student nurse insert your IV
While getting prepped for surgery, the nurse introduced me to Melanie, a nursing student from ASU (Go Devils!) The nurse asked me if I minded if Melanie inserted my IV. I hate needles as much as anyone, but I figured why not get a little good Karma working my way and let her practice on me? Other than a little blood that spurted on her and the floor, she did a great job.

Eight. Phlebotomists are modern day vampires
No one told me how much blood is drawn during a hospital stay and recovery. I made it to my hospital room at 8pm on Friday and by midnight Monday, no less than 12 blood draws were taken. Worst of all, it seems that most draws occurred between 10pm and 4am. Why that time? Easy. The phlebotomists are vampires. A vial for the lab, a vial for them. Combine that with the insane number of draws and it makes perfect sense.

Seven. Hyperextending your elbow during a blood draw makes it way easier
While I'm on the topic, one kind, gentle, middle aged, non-vampire phlebotomist gave me a great tip about keeping my arm as straight as possible during the draw. It was amazing how much it helped. I will forever remember her tip and attempt to hyper-extend my elbow every time a vampire phlebotomist comes near me.

Six. Walks around the nurses station can get competitive
Regardless of how much you hurt, if another patient is taking a walk at the same time, you become possessed to complete your lap faster than them. It just happens.

Five. Time can stand still the first few days after surgery
This one is unreal. A large clock is across the room from your bed. It is not your friend. I would wake up, look at the clock and the time was one fifteen am.. I would fall back asleep, into what felt like a deep sleep and then wake up, look at the clock, and the time was one twenty am. This happened more times than I can remember.

Four. Hospitals are for sick people. Get out and recuperate As Soon as Possible
Enough said.

Three. Much like building a business relationship, create bonds with the nursing staff. It helps.
Why wouldn't you want a good working relationship with the people that can make you more comfortable? Banner Desert nurses were incredible.

Two. Pain pumps rock!
As soon as I was able to understand how the pain pump worked, it became my little friend. When the light turned green, all I had to do was push it for a little morphine in the drip. If offered, always accept the pain pump.

One. There is nothing better than seeing your spouse come through the door.
I told my wife prior to surgery that I did not want her holding a vigil in my hospital room. If I was sleeping, take advantage of the time to get home and get some rest or take care of things she needed to do. I told her I had around the clock care so I would be fine. However, to be honest, on the rare occasion she was not there when I woke up, I really wished she was.

Update
My surgery was Friday, September 14th. Monday night, September 17th, Dr Buckmire dropped by with the pathology report. He was able to grab 15 lymph nodes near the cancer site. 9 tested positive for cancer. It only takes 1. Much like I knew surgery was going to happen when I heard the words "It is cancer" after the colonoscopy, I knew immediately that chemotherapy was the next step. No ifs, ands or buts.

That process starts this week with oncologist appointments. I will be interviewing at least two, maybe more. From my doctors, and cancer survivors I've talked to, I'm looking at treatment that lasts something in the 6 month range.

Bring it on.