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POETRY/FICTION

Poems

After a decade-long battle with spinal cancer, Chris died at age 22.

Chris had the last word, though. For his funeral Mass, his parents, Cindy and David, gave their permission for his girlfriend Holly to read Chris's poem and so share with the world an opportunity to experience the wonder of life and death in the context of the death of another, and for many of us to find meaning in our world and work:

Oh cancer, my cancer

Oh cancer, my cancer,
Where are we to begin?
You take millions of lives each year,
As if there is no sin.

You come in all shapes and sizes
Leaving many with no hope
Ripping the innocent out of this world
Leaving loved ones behind with no way to cope.

Oh cancer, my cancer,
How lucky was I to have found you?
One out of twelve in the world
I surely beat the odds, that much is true.

And what weapons do I have to fight you?
Beyond radiation there is nothing in the cabinet.
With such a rare and orphaned disease
There are no doctors around willing to attack it.

Oh cancer, my cancer,
What have you done to me?
But to take away my hopes and dreams
And put tumors where they should not be.

You've given me a limited lifetime
I did not want to believe it when this nightmare began.
It was just too hard to think and actually believe,
That anyone could be middle aged at the age of ten.

Oh cancer, my cancer,
How could you further mock me by taking my legs?
As if my hair and spirit weren't enough,
None I will get back no matter how hard I pray and beg.
No longer can I climb mountains
Run in parks or swim in the oceans.

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Oh cancer, my cancer,
What was the worst thing you could have done to me?
But to take away my ability to be father,
Which is the one thing in this world I most ached to be.

I won't ever be able to be in a delivery room,
Or pick out my newborn's first name.
It sickens me to the deepest part of my soul,
And you sir are the one to blame.

Oh cancer, my cancer,
What am I to do?
Oh cancer, my cancer,
Shame on you!

—Deb Bagnasco Stanford, M.S.N., R.N.
Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Nursing,
University of North Carolina–Greensboro,
Greensboro, North Carolina

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Debra Stanford, Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, University of North Carolina–Greensboro, 123B Moore Building, Greensboro, North Carolina 27402-6170. E-mail: debra_stanford@uncg.edu

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