

## Bassam's Story

**BASSAM:** Palliative care is more important, or as important as the treatment itself. They're there to take the worry out of your mind.

We're all going to die, regardless so the first positive thing out of this, that I know my time is coming soon and I don't have much time left.

I'm going to have to take, like, advantage of this situation and change it into positive.

My name is Bassam Abedalqader, I'm 52-years-old, married, I've got five kids – four boys, one girl, and beautiful six grandkids.

I'm originally from Palestine. My dad and mum resided in Kuwait. I lived with them, finished my high school in Kuwait and I noticed that there is no future in Kuwait so I looked around to see a country with, that's got some rights for humans, freedom, opportunities and so on, and settled for Australia.

Lucky decision was back in 1981, I applied, they accepted me, I came to Australia, I migrated back in 1981 I was only 19 then.

During that year I met my beautiful wife, she was 17, working in a fruit shop and got along, got married.

Most of the family was against us they said you're too young, won't work, but we proved that they were wrong, it worked and it's been a lovely life in Australia, I love it, it's my country and the people in it are one of the best people around.

They're down to earth, they will go out of their way to help you out, they're everything mate.

I didn't know anything about the cancer, all I noticed is that my abdomen is getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and I thought I was eating too much I wanted to change my diet because I had been fat No pain whatsoever.

On a Thursday, after a little pain, sharp pain in the lower part of my abdomen and then I ignored it, it didn't last long.

On Friday the pain came back. By Saturday my left leg started hurting me during work and then became so numb I couldn't even move it.

So I went to hospital and they looked at my leg because the colour starts to change and they say it's a blood clot, we need to do a CT scan and see exactly where it is and that's when they came back with the results and they said *"mate don't worry about the blood clot for now, you have cancer."*

I was diagnosed with the small round cell sarcoma.

Unfortunately there's no cure for it, no chemo treatment or radiation treatment, so they asked me to do some trials, which I did, three of them and unfortunately they all failed, like total failure, but this is life.

Cancer is made of two types of pain and they're both bad, but one is worse than other.

You get the first pain which is the organ pain from the cancer itself, the organ that's been affected with cancer, and the best way to describe it is like someone stabbing you with knives, all through your body.

Whether my cancer is with me, it's my abdomen, so the whole of the abdomen this is not fat, this is actually the actual cancer itself and the pain goes all the way down my bladder, prostate, groin area and so on.

The other pain you get from cancer is the psychological pain. News like this makes you think the reality, that you're actually running out of time and you don't know what to do.

Fear starts crawling to your heart, your mind and then I realised that there is another life. There can't be this. Our life here can't just be eat, slave, work and no justice.

I'm a Muslim, I've always been close to god. I talk to god as if I'm talking to someone in front of me and I admit what I've done and I ask him for forgiveness and seek his heaven, his paradise which comforts me a lot.

One of the things that will come straight to your mind that you're leaving and you're leaving soon. Is to fix things up between you and the closest people to you, especially your missus, your kids, the ones you love most and it does help a lot and doesn't hurt to go to them and tell them how much you love them and how grateful you are to them.

If it wasn't for my missus help and her support and standing up by me I wouldn't make it. My family, and then more at the beginning, they were shocked, they took it hard, they start crying and then they got over it slowly.

They're against me saying no to an operation, they're against me saying no to more trials of chemo, they want me to keep on trying because they want me living, they don't want me to leave them in another words.

They got over it at the moment, they're only supporting me with everything I want.

A lot of people now think I'm healthy and that I'm now cured from cancer because I'm working back again, smiling and laughing, eating.

Palliative care is not the end stage, it's a continuation for your life and therefore they make your life comfy, really comfy and you need it.

Instead being in bed, sick in agony, screaming of pain, you're out walking out and about, you're with your loved ones.

You can go shopping, you can go home, there's nothing wrong with carrying a pump that gives me a dose of painkillers every hour. It becomes part of you, but gives you the chance to live life and go out.

Palliative care is very important. This is the physical part of it. They have the preachers there, you can get anyone to help you out spiritually, and they're there for you 24 hours.

They have the social workers there as well to help you out with your everyday affairs, if you need anything with Centrelink or government issues, your will, whatever, they're there to help you out.

In my opinion, palliative care is a treatment, especially spiritually, they help you to live your last days in peace.