

CHERYL'S WORLD

MY TRUTH: July Is Uterine Fibroid Awareness Month



By **Cheryl Smith**

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Twenty years ago my doctor told me that doctors he consulted with didn't expect me to live.

You see, going into surgery, there was going to be some moving around of "stuff " inside of me and there was a possibility that some blood clots would break away and rush to my heart.

Death would result.

I survived and still today I thank Dr. William Glaze for not throwing in the towel on me.

A few other things happened 20 years ago.

Because of my surgery I was unable to attend my annual Don't Believe the Hype Celebrity Bowl-a-thon; someone I adored, Paula McClure passed; and one of my best friends, someone who I looked forward to sharing war stories with in our senior years, veteran journalist Lawrence Young, died.

It was a rough time for me. But there were some memorable times, too.

I also had extended visits from my mother, father and stepmother — all at the same time — in my house!

Heavy sigh.

They too have since transitioned, and there are no words to express how much I would love to be able to entertain them today!

Which brings me to my truth.

As I look back on the past 20 years and vividly recall the words of Dr. Glaze, who I asolutely love; I can't help but think about the designation of July as Uterine Fibroid Awareness Month.

I've known Dr. Suzanne Slonim and her wife, Pam Gerber for years. I was especially interested in Dr. Slonim because of her work with women suffering with fibroid tumors. She's considered an expert!

You may have met her out in the community, attending events, participating in community fairs and educating folks on fibroids; or you may have heard her on KRNB 105.7, interviewed by the Diva with A Voice, Lynne Haze.

Technology is far more advanced in 2022 than it was last century and I am happy for those who have benefited from the advances and efforts of Dr. Slonim, who realizes that Black and Latina women are more susceptible to fibroids.

Are we genetically predisposed to grow fibroids?

While some believe that if their mom had fibroids they will automatically have them; this is not the case.

Now if you eat some of the same things and lead the same type of lifestyle as your mom; well, you just might find yourself contributing to the "hereditary" narrative.

When I was diagnosed with fibroid tumors, Dr. Glaze and I had a talk about what path to take. There were several paths: myomectomy (an operation to remove fibroids while preserving the uterus), hysterectomy (surgical procedure to remove the womb -uterus), wait and see, participate in a UT South-western (UTSW) program to reduce the tumors, or take shots at home as a way to reduce the tumors.

Now sometimes I can be a little utilitarianistic (here I am making up a word); thinking I could save the world.

I opted for the UTSW study because if they could find out something and fix the problem; I could be part of saving wombs around the world!

In addition to self-administered daily shots I had to change my diet : no hormone-induced meats (tumors feed off of them), no caffeine, nicotine or dairy products.

What does that tell you?

Some things are not good for you or the tumors!

At the end of the UTSW program, there was a significant reduction in my tumors. But the damage was done and I remember celebrating until they returned and in 2002, it was determined that surgery was necessary.

After the surgery, I spent the next year writing columns focused on females, specifically younger women; telling them things I wished I had been told when I was growing up.

Hopefully I made a difference in someone's life then, today and the days in between.

As each day passes I have been committed to making those who prayed for me proud that I made it out of surgery and back into the world.

Through the efforts of many, maybe, just maybe fewer women will have to go under the knife and suffer the many symptoms and discomforts associated with fibroid tumors.

This July, I hope you will join me, and others, in learning and sharing more about fibroids. Plan to attend the Self-Care Fair, Saturday, July 16, 2022 at 11a.m., at After 8 to Educate (Fannie C. Harris Youth Center) 4212 E. Grand Avenue in Dallas. There are also events throughout the month. Just log on to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dal-las-self-care-fair-texas-fibroid-awareness-month-tickets-368394867967?aff=ebdssbeac>.

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