

This is the ninth newsletter in a series of ONCORG Community Conversations. They're focused on relationships between doctors and patients, and the complexity of treating cancer.

May 2026 – Late Edition: About Laura Cooper's Cancer Survivorship. You gotta get a second Opinion.



Rodney Thomas is a senior officer working for ONCORG, INC, headquartered in Mt. Laurel, NJ. ONCORG was developed as a comprehensive cancer support service for those seeking a first or second opinion for their cancer.

Mr. Thomas is a military veteran who served eight years in the USAF. He also spent eleven years in the automotive industry, ten years in healthcare and eight years with Apple Inc. supporting customer needs.

Laura Cooper of Moorestown, NJ is one of my heroes. I always defined heroism by witnessing someone who battles and overcomes an enemy I would find daunting. And I'm a tough guy.

After twenty years of battling cancer, Laura is thriving today, giving back to her community, her friends and her family with grace and profound appreciation. In 2006, at the age of forty-two, she was diagnosed with Stage 3 Ovarian Cancer. But, her cancer was dismissed as a harmless cyst because someone failed to read the entire medical report. There's a reason to always seek a second opinion when a problem persists.

In 2008, her cancer returned wrapped around her spine. She was told by a world-renowned health system to get her affairs in order, but she got a second opinion. Surgeons at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in NYC performed a very complex procedure, and removed as much of the tumor as safely possible without causing neurological damage. Thirty rounds of radiation followed, leading to nerve damage in her leg. There's a reason to always seek a second opinion.

In 2020, her annual mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy revealed Triple Negative Breast Cancer. She underwent a mastectomy, reconstruction and eight rounds of chemotherapy. And life for Laura goes on.

In 2024, a small microscopic pancreatic cancer cell was discovered, leading to Whipple Surgery, followed by six rounds of chemo. For the average reader the Whipple procedure involves surgery to remove tumors from the head of the pancreas, duodenum, gallbladder, or bile duct. It typically takes four to six hours, with a one to two weeks stay in the hospital, and close to six months of recovery. Because the Whipple procedure involves removing parts of the pancreas, small intestine, and stomach, the digestive system is permanently altered. Laura had to make dietary and bowel changes, because of the way the body breaks down food. In addition she experienced lingering weakness and low energy. But she was prepared to continue her fight.

Laura reminded me how she survived by surrendering. This got my attention. Thirty years ago, I read a book called *The Seat of the Soul* by Gary Zukav. One of the topics included surrendering. Surrendering is not failure nor is it giving up. It is the ultimate act of courage. It means releasing your ego's exhausting need to control every outcome and trusting in a higher wisdom. In *The Seat of the Soul*, this yielding replaces fear-based resistance with deep resilience, allowing one to move through life with authentic power. It's a true use of power. I applaud Laura.

She's learned to face hardships with a smile, and to never take her health for granted. She is a living testament to the power of hope, earned by never yielding and leaving everyone around her in awe. The reason ONCORG publishes articles like these is to inspire others and turn Laura's triumph into a beacon of hope for many.

Her struggles did not come without a human perspective. She hid her pain and depression from her children. She sent them to school, slept until they returned, and pretended she was cooking and cleaning. This is very common among mothers.

My mother Ivy had cancer twenty-two years ago, and confided about her disease only to her sister, but not me. She did not want me to worry. Eventually I learned of her struggles from my Aunt Marion. I was so angry about this, but eventually resigned to the fact that two sisters were entitled to keep a secret. Laura wanted to protect her children as best as she could. Just like my mother did.

The Moorestown, NJ community has rallied around Laura and her husband Brian. Her neighbors occasionally raked the leaves and cleaned their yard. Many meals were delivered to their house, and her mother took care of the children. Yes, it does take a village.

Laura's fight will never end. Because of the massive amounts of radiation and chemo, every joint needs to be replaced. Her vascular necrosis does not end there, The bone structure in her mouth is compromised and she will need oral surgery. She stopped counting surgeries after eighteen. Yet, despite all of this, she gets up every day and takes care of those with greater needs than herself. She helps seniors, and believes this is God's plan for her. This is power with a purpose.

The financial strain on Laura and Brian is immense. She recalls with guilt the times when she could not afford to send her kids to Lacrosse camp, so they could have some fun with their friends. Sometimes she struggles with her memory caused by her medication. This should come as no surprise to our readers. Throughout all of this Laura Cooper knows she is blessed. Her children are grown and she looks forward to seeing her three loving grandchildren.

I hope this article inspires our readers to recognize and admire the power in her survivorship. Although a cancer diagnosis feels insurmountable, continuing to fight is about reclaiming your tomorrows.

Rodney Thomas
ONCORG – Chief Communication Officer