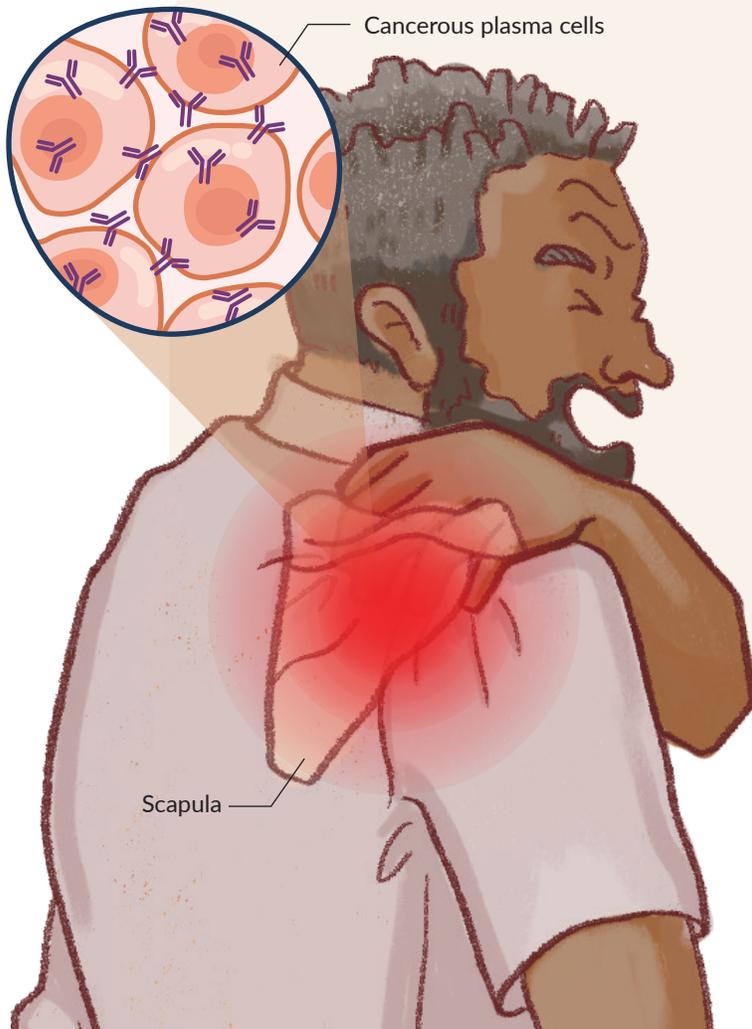
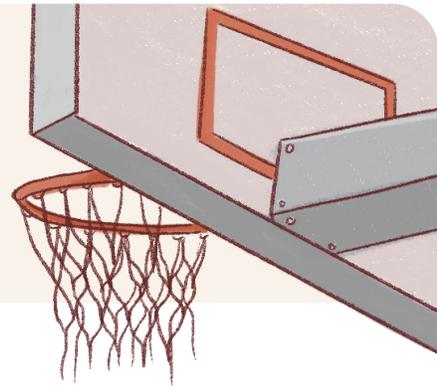




My name is Thomas,
and this is **my multiple
myeloma story.**

Diagnosis

At age 34, I was healthy and enjoying life. I went to the gym daily, and when I wasn't working out, I was shooting hoops with friends.



During a workout, I suddenly felt excruciating pain in my shoulder. My family physician declared I had bursitis, but I was so young and in such good physical shape, I knew by instinct that the diagnosis was wrong. I made an appointment with a sports medicine doctor, who ran CT and MRI scans of my upper body. The result wasn't good. I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancerous tumor of plasma cells in my scapula.

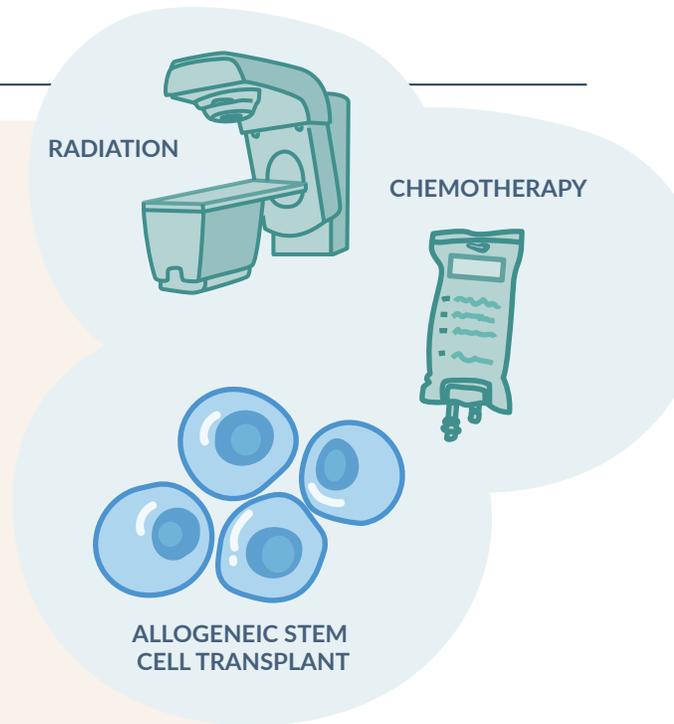
Because the myeloma was localized to my shoulder, my oncologist recommended 6 weeks of radiation therapy. 10 months after the treatment, the agonizing pain returned, but this time in my lower back. The pain was so intense, I remember lying on the floor, unable to move. My myeloma has spread to my lower backbone and ribs. This time, I received an autologous stem cell transplant, but after 2 months, I relapsed again.

“I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancerous tumor of plasma cells in my scapula.”

Participating in Clinical Trials

Still determined, I agreed to participate in a clinical trial to receive an allogeneic stem cell transplant using human leukocyte antigen (HLA)-matched donor cells from my brother Earnest. This time, I lived cancer-free for two years before relapsing.

To keep the cancer from progressing, I joined another clinical trial to receive a second allogeneic transplant using my brother's donor cells. This aggressive treatment also included an intensive conditioning regimen of high-dose chemotherapy plus total-body irradiation. Although the therapeutic effects were serious and kept me hospitalized for 127 days, the transplant was successful and pushed back my cancer for another two years.



BLACK



WHITE

Blacks are **2x as likely** to develop multiple myeloma compared to whites, and are also more likely to be diagnosed at a younger age.

“I want to share my story as a Black person with multiple myeloma to raise awareness of this rare cancer.”



The Road Ahead

Since then, my cancer has relapsed multiple times, but I refuse to accept defeat. Although my cancer is unlikely to be curable, my current treatment has been successful at keeping the myeloma from advancing. I'm hopeful that I can live a long life while treating it as a chronic disease.

It's critical we increase the participation of Black people in clinical trials so we can understand why multiple myeloma poses a greater risk for us, and get closer to a cure.

Participating in clinical trials is contributing to research for tomorrow's medicines, and an opportunity to make a difference for myself and for others facing multiple myeloma.



Know all of the facts about clinical trials before choosing whether or not to participate in one.



Ask your doctor about ongoing clinical trials and if you might be a suitable candidate.

AUTHOR'S BIO



Thomas Goode resides in Durham, North Carolina. He is a co-founder of the Triangle Area Multiple Myeloma Support Group which aims to raise awareness of multiple myeloma and provide support for survivors.

© 2021 Patient Empowerment Network, a 501(c)(3) Public Charity
Produced by Diverse Health Hub

1. National Cancer Institute: Multiple myeloma awareness and African American disparities. Available at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/crhd/blog/2017/multiple-myeloma-disparities>.