



“When my GP told me I’d got cancer that was the last thing I remember him saying. Everything else was just drowned out by the screaming in my head”

A cancer patient recalls the moment of diagnosis



“A sector infused with highly personal sensitivities” Navigating the landscape to identify what patients really need and want

It’s an irony in life that, despite the vast improvements in treatments and cures, the longer we live our likelihood of developing a tumour actually increases, not decreases. Either way cancer is a word that strikes fear into peoples’ hearts.

Learning how not to live in fear of the big ‘C’ is a key to patient recovery. Consequently, this means striving to overcome some long-held beliefs and prejudices. That’s why I video my cancer consultations so that afterwards they can look at it to absorb the information about treatments that they really needed to know, but didn’t take in”

As an eminent oncologist was later to tell me “No-one wants to hear the ‘C’ word. Once you start telling people they’ve got cancer they go into denial or panic. That’s why I video my cancer consultations so that afterwards they can look at it to absorb the information about treatments that they really needed to know, but didn’t take in”

For some time now Radiotherapy has, incorrectly, been seen as a follow up procedure in cancer treatment, with Chemotherapy and, more recently, targeted cancer drugs like Herceptin® spearheading the fight. In our research we looked at the underlying reasons for negative attitudes towards Radiotherapy and how these could be reversed. Would they be impressed by the technology and survival rates? How could perceptions about radiotherapy as a 2nd strike treatment be reversed?

We conducted extensive in-depth conversations with a range of patients and experts. Traveling with patients to radiotherapy sessions, as well as with GPs and Oncologists, we opened up a rich stream of consciousness about what people believed and feared most. Though various aspects of technological efficacy were admired and much-reduced side effects and far shorter treatment times were a revelation, it was something altogether different that meant more. The human touch.

We uncovered that what people particularly feared was the notion of being ‘processed’ and that being at the mercy of technology, left them feeling out of control. As a result, we were able to help our client develop a series of communication ideas based around the notion of ‘My Radiotherapy’ in which real patients talked about the control and input that they have in their high-tech treatments.

By changing tack from a technological to human focus we were able to help our client develop a digital and print campaign that’s now positively altering perceptions of Radiotherapy and its very leading contribution in the fight against cancer.