

September 5, 2018

Dear Friend,

I don't normally like to write about these things directly on Needle 'n Thread, so I usually link them to a PDF letter like this, for those who want to know what's up with me and my health journey since being diagnosed with cancer three years ago.

Fortunately, this incident only has to do with cancer indirectly.

After months of being sick off and on, I ended up in the ER twice in the last six weeks. The second time resulted in a quick trip to Topeka for emergency surgery to repair multiple hernias that were a result of cancer surgery and radiation a couple years ago. I had three major hernias along the original surgical incision, and innumerable small hernias in the muscle wall, from the radiation. They call this the "swiss cheese" effect. While I knew I had one hernia (it was often mentioned in CT scans), I didn't know I had that many!

During the surgery, the surgeon discovered, aside from the intestines at risk, a golfball-sized lump stuck in one of the hernias, along with the intestine. It ended up being a piece of the omentum, which was actually supposedly completely removed during the previous surgery. It was lodged in one of the hernias with part of a bowel and causing considerable pressure and pain.

With the intestines in an immediate state of risk, there was no choice about when to do the surgery, so I wasn't prepared for the time off! Normally, I have some blog posts prepared in advance for this kind of thing, but between being sick off and on and keeping up with the summer classes earlier, I haven't been able to write as far ahead as I normally would!

I was in the hospital for four days, and then recovering at home. The recovery was slower than expected and very painful, and I could do very little.

Then, last week, my family experienced a much more traumatic incident. My 27-year-old nephew who lives here in Kansas where he works and goes to university (but whose immediate family lives in Florida), was hit by a motorcycle traveling at 70 mph through the 20 mph pedestrian area in our downtown. It was touch-and-go whether or not he would live, as the damage was extensive. Thankfully, he is pulling through, after innumerable ongoing surgeries at KU Med in Kansas City, where he was life-flighted. He still has a few surgeries to go, and then months of rehab ahead of him. It has been a worrying time.

Then, just when I was starting to get around a little better at the end of last week, some kind of allergic reaction to something kicked in, covering me from tip to toe with hives, which I've had now for six days. I thought I was going to go mad from the irritation! I contacted my doctor on Monday, and she put me on steroids (not a favorite route to take, but sometimes, these things are necessary!) and antihistamines, which have taken the edge off a bit, thankfully.

So, while the last two and half weeks haven't been all that pleasant, now I can at least sit at a desk for a little while. And, although I have the steroid "shakes," I can do some simple embroidery. I'm hoping that, by Friday, I'm able to get out of the house and over to my studio to get some real work done.

I'm very thankful for the encouragement so many of you have sent along! Thanks so much for your prayers and your good wishes! Please God, this will be the end of medical problems for a while! I'd like to experience one or two years without major medical expenses or set-backs. But what will be, will be. I'm certainly thankful for all the good days!

Love,
Mary