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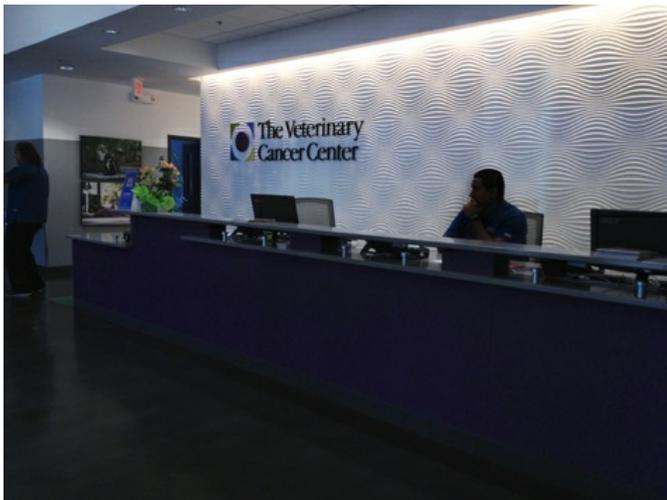
Staying Strong for Gracie. Part 5. Dare to Dream.

Thu, 2015-09-10 21:43 — Robin Olson

(Continued from Parts [1](#) ^[1], [2](#) ^[2] and [3](#) ^[3] and [4](#) ^[4])

The Veterinary Cancer Center is enormous, clean, elegant with a sophisticated interior design. It's the biggest facility of its kind in the country. We're so lucky to live nearby. The staff is impeccably dressed, smart, capable. You clearly get what you pay for because you can feel that this is "the place" to be if your pet is sick. It was nearly 3pm, the time of our appointment. The door opened and I looked up. There was Katherine, standing in the doorway with a silly smirk on her face.

I went over to her and gave her a big hug. It had been months since we'd last seen each other. She and Sam said their hellos, then she bent down and met Gracie, who looked up at her and meowed softly. Having a friend there helped me forget to be scared. We made jokes, as we often do when we're worried or having a bad time. She agreed that Gracie didn't look "that bad" but we all knew how cats can hide illness. At that point I'd take any positive news. Did I dare hope for any more?



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Interior of VCC.

The Tech came to escort us into Exam Room 3 so we bid Katherine farewell with a promise to update her as soon as we had news. The last time we'd been in that exam room was with Fred. *I didn't want to think about that again.*

The Tech got Gracie's history, even though they had copies of her records. I told them my thoughts that Gracie getting so sick right after her dental told me that the dental had something to do with it. She'd been given FOUR different antibiotics before and after her procedure. We'd done it because she lost her appetite and we thought the meds were the culprit, not the possibility that the meds were destroying her liver because it was full of cysts. It couldn't handle the load from the sedation, pain-killers, antibiotics and appetite stimulants she'd been given. To me it added up to be cysts, not cancer, but I was just a mom worried about her cat and cysts weren't something cats died from so that's what I hoped it would be.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Waiting to see Dr. Post.

Dr. Post entered the room with a second Vet at his side. Clearly she was observing while he did his thing. Dr. Post examined Gracie and spoke with us about her history. He nodded his head as he listened. **When I told him about how the Vet would not do the transfusion he made the most sour-puss expression I've ever seen. He was far too refined to say the Vet was a jerk, but you could tell that Gracie SHOULD have been transfused. He said it WOULD have helped her and couldn't understand why it wasn't done.**

Before my blood could boil he moved on, saying that he wrote the paper on something called [biliarycystadenoma](#) ^[5], so he knows them well. That he felt aside from the fluid in her abdomen, that she was presenting as cystic, not a cat with cancer. Depending on the cysts they usually did surgery to remove them, but if they were too diffuse they wouldn't. He couldn't be 100% certain just now, but wanted to do a quick check of Gracie's hematocrit to see if she was still seriously anemic, then devise a plan after that.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Hello, Gracie!

So Gracie might REALLY REALLY REALLY NOT have CANCER. The 10% chance it was cysts just became more like 90%.

Sam and I looked at each other and smiled, too stunned to say a word. I gave the okay to do the test. We were told to wait in the lobby and they'd be with us shortly. I couldn't believe what was happening.

We waited.

Dr. Post came out with his posse. **He greeted us warmly and said that Gracie's hematocrit was up to 20. I threw my arms up and yelled YES!** Dr. Post was taken aback by my outburst, but I was thrilled. In three days Gracie's body was producing enough blood cells to stave off the anemia. She still had a way to go to be normal but this was a VERY GOOD SIGN. Dr. Post asked us to come back in two weeks. We'd do another CBC and re-evaluate her then. **Did we have a diagnosis? No, but we were getting closer.**

All I knew was, Gracie was alive and Gracie was probably going to live another two weeks.

In the past four days I'd had four Vets tell me that Gracie either needed to be put down or that she wasn't going to be with us much longer and to prepare. We could have gone that route and let her go, but we stayed strong. We looked into our cat's vivid green eyes and we asked her what she wanted. She was critically ill, near death, but she was still Gracie. The flame of life still flickered in her eyes. It took a toll on my health to see her through this, but for the first time in weeks I finally had hope again and this time I could imagine the possibility of better days to come.

Nine Days Later

The knot in my gut is gone, but I admit I'm on episode 87 of *Frasier* to keep myself calm. I started working again and getting my life back on track. Though we've had some downs, Gracie has mostly been on the up and up. **She still sleeps in one small area of the living room on the big oriental rug, but she's getting on her feet more and more, even meeting me at the door one day, meowing at me to be fed.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. My darling, Gracie.

Her appetite is not 100% but she's eating as long as we keep her on her daily meds of Prednisilone and Zofran. She's purring, grooming herself, using her litter pan, meowing complaints (*as she used to do*). Yesterday she trotted into the kitchen, tail held high. She carefully jumped onto the bench, then up onto the kitchen table. It was the first jump she'd made in two weeks.

This morning Gracie was very perky. She had her breakfast, then walked over to the sofa where Sam and I were sitting. She looked like she wanted to jump up so I carefully lifted her, placing her next to me. She tried to make herself comfortable by putting her front paws on my leg, half sitting on me and half on the sofa. In her 12 years with me she was never brave enough to sit on my lap. I eased a blanket over my bare legs, then gently lifted her, placing her on my chest. She laid down and rested her head on my chest. She only weighs a little over 8 pounds. I could feel the heat begin to expand between our bodies as Gracie relaxed. I put my head back on the sofa and closed my eyes. In that moment everything I ever dreamed of for Gracie was happening. She was comfortable. She was happy. She was safe.

She was alive.

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Comments

Thu, 2015-09-10 22:05 — Ann Burkes (not verified)

I hope sweet Gracie will ^[12]

I hope sweet Gracie will continue to improve. Love to you both.

Thu, 2015-09-10 23:27 — Val Jeglum (not verified)

Gracie is coming back ^[13]

Robin, I have just read about Gracie's troubles. I want you to know how very smart and brave you are to have stayed by her and gotten her through this thing. I once had a gray cat who we called Grace. She looked a lot like your Gracie and your story brought her back to me for a while. I sincerely hope Gracie is out of the woods now and you and Sam will have your lives back. I followed Freya's story and was amazed at your strength then. Do keep telling your stories - they will make a wonderful book or more.

Fri, 2015-09-11 13:55 — jmuwj (not verified)

RE: GRACIE ^[14]

Very, very good news. May there continue to be more of it! *PRAYERS* and snorgles for Gracie & family

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