

“Chuck everything at me!”

A sore back while fencing was the first sign of trouble for Taumarunui farmer Trevor Schroeder.

In December 2006, after a visit to a chiropractor, then the hospital for some x-rays, and then to an orthopaedic surgeon for tests and scans, Trevor was sent to Waikato Hospital for a bone marrow test. The results were not good.

“The doctor told me I had multiple myeloma, and I said ‘What’s that?’ He said, ‘Bone cancer’ and I thought ‘Oh no’.”

The doctor told him to go home, get his affairs in order and return the following week to begin treatment. “I asked the doctor what would happen if I didn’t go through with the treatment, and he said I would die. So I told him to chuck everything at me.”

‘Everything’ consisted of intense chemotherapy, radiation treatment and stem cell therapy, which meant Trevor needed to be in isolation for a month. He left hospital weighing just 54 kilos after seven months of treatment.

“I came home and I couldn’t walk far. So I had to build up my strength - one day I’d walk to feed the chooks, then a bit further the next day, and further the next day, then I’d be able to walk to the woolshed.

Trevor says the Cancer Society has been a great help to him throughout his cancer experience. He attends regular support groups in Taumarunui, and has visits and phone calls from liaison nurse Vicki Donderwinkel. He also briefly stayed at the old Lions Cancer Lodge during his treatment.

“It’s been good, really good,” he says of the support he has received.

“Vicki knows where we can go to get more help, who to contact. She’s a good listener and introduced you to lots of other people with cancer.”

Nearly five years after his diagnosis, Trevor is living with his cancer. He is on a drug which confines the cancer to his bones so it won’t spread, and is working to let others know about the support of the Cancer Society by promoting the local support group and the society’s services.

“It’s a good thing if people can see what the Cancer Society is doing.”

To show his thanks, Trevor has been out picking daffodils at his neighbour’s farm in the lead up to Daffodil Day. The blooms are then taken into town, bundled up and sold to fundraise for the appeal, which is happening this year on Friday [August 26].

And Trevor’s advice for anyone else going through their own cancer journey?

“Don’t sit around on your bum waiting for cancer to finish you off - get out your bucket list and live each day.”

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