

### **Alicia Patten**

*The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*

Hi I'm Alicia Patten.

### **Lizette Figueroa-Rivera**

*The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*

And I'm Lizette Figueroa-Rivera.

### **Alicia Patten**

We're the hosts of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's patient podcast, "The Bloodline with LLS."

### **Lizette Figueroa-Rivera**

A few years ago, we met some young adults who were completing their treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

### **Alicia Patten**

And they were gracious enough to join us today. Let's see how they're doing.

### **Abby-Gail Solomons, MSW, AAS**

*Courtelis Center for Psychosocial Oncology  
UM Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center*

Post-treatment there are a lot of concerns that come up for young adults, just considering will I be able to have children, reoccurrence, will my cancer return, pain, emotional issues, anxiety, depression. Fertility does come up, because now that a young adult has gone through treatment, they would like to know how effective were the precautions that were taken. They would like to know what's the possibility of me now having a child. There's a lot of uncertainty.

### **Javier**

*Survivor*

How was it for you guys having a family after treatment?

### **Stephen**

*Survivor*

The first doctor that I went to, she told me that I had to start treatment right away, and that we could not wait. I was fortunate though that there was a delay in something, so it gave me a couple of days to actually be able to go to a sperm bank to be able to get that process going. If I didn't advocate for myself and use that time to do that, then it wouldn't have been able to happen. So it was— It's always

important that you understand your options and are able to take advantage of that. And so, because of that, we were able to go forward and now at this point, to be able to have two kids, it was a very fortunate decision at that time.

### **Betty**

*Survivor*

I was given the option to freeze my eggs, but they did tell me that the process would take around two to three months, and my cancer was so aggressive that I could have lost my life. So, it was one of those, you have the option but we highly recommend you don't do it because we don't have the time for it. And I think a lot of people probably who are in that situation where you have to think about living versus maybe not having a family, and you've got to balance it, and since at that time I already had my son, he was only four months old, I was like, you know what? I already have a child, so I need to be here for him. It was easy for me to make that decision, but I think if I wasn't a mom, it would have been harder for me to make that decision, just the thought of never having a child, the possibility. And, I was given the 50/50 chance of me not being able to conceive, but fortunately now in my new relationship and I have a one year old.

### **Javier**

For me it was totally different because I was in middle school when this happened. I was 14, 15, so the thought of kids wasn't even anywhere in my mind. I remember the doctor explaining it to my mother and my father of course, and I was there kind of listening but not paying attention because again it wasn't something that was of importance to me. And now I have a three-year-old and my wife is pregnant again with another child so luckily everything worked out, but it wasn't something that I even thought of.

### **Jeremy**

*Survivor*

My situation, I was in college when I was diagnosed so they actually asked me if I wanted to bank before getting chemo, and there was a little bit of logistical issue where they put the chemo in before the person came to do the banking. And legally they couldn't take it then. So, we're talking about an hour of a major issue, but at that point I didn't know. I wasn't able to bank anything, and I was told that you may not be able to have a child. But I always knew that I wanted to have children, and one way or another I think I would've found a way, whether it was through adoption or something else. But when I met my wife later on, I decided that I wanted to go get tested so that we would know, and I got tested and they seemed to be confident that I would be able to have children. Later on, several years later, we did and now we have two healthy, hopefully healthy, kids. I guess the thing that I learned from it is asking the question upfront and making sure that you're your own advocate. At the time I didn't realize it, but saying, "No, I want to do this before I get the chemo injected." Unfortunately, there are glitches like this all the time.

### **Stephen**

Like Jeremy said you have to be your own advocate, because certainly when my doctor told me that there was no time to wait, that I had to start treatment immediately, and only because there was a

delay in the diagnosis— in confirming certain things, why I had some time and I was like, "okay, well, I'm going use this time to make sure that we're able to bank." And it was only because of that. And going to another doctor afterwards, he was outraged that they didn't allow me the opportunity to do that with their blessing. Because I had to go against what the first doctor said originally to be able to get that done.

**Javier**

Like Steven would not have been able to make it in time, they took that away from you, so it's this being really smart, ask... be smart, ask questions, Like you said you've got to advocate for yourself.

**Abby**

My role as a social worker is to provide some reassurance, provide education, but to also connect them with the necessary services that they may need to continue with family planning, or even embark on family planning, so that they may be able to try to have children if that's something that they want to do.