



CÉRÉMONIE D'OUVERTURE 2010

TÉMOIGNAGE DE DAVID

My name is David. I am from England but Luxembourg has been my home for the past 25 years. I have prostate cancer. I will always remember the day and the moment I first got the diagnosis. I knew very little about cancer, and had thought about it even less. It was certainly one of the worst days of my life. It felt like a death sentence. But that was more than seven years ago.

Since then I have had surgery on two occasions, and twice my cancer has re-appeared. I continue to be under treatment. I no longer expect to be cured, and will live with cancer for the rest of my life. But I am still with you here today. In short, it is possible to live with cancer.

Indeed, my case is nothing unusual. As a society we live longer, and at some stage in our lives one in three of us will be diagnosed with some kind of malignant tumour. My point is that it is a fact of life, to be aware of, and if we are among the one of the three, something to live with.

The initial period of treatment was difficult for me as it is for most cancer sufferers. Psychologically I was in a state of shock. I wasted time and energy blaming myself and looking for a "cause". With the benefit of hindsight, the most important thing is to concentrate first on treatment and then on recovery.

Recovering from cancer is a time when we need all the help we can get. I am grateful to the innumerable people and organisations who helped me during a difficult time in my life.

- I start with my wife who was by my side when I awoke from surgery. It was my wife who listened carefully to everything the doctors had said and helped me to digest what I needed to know when I was still in a state of shock and unreceptive ;
- I am grateful to the doctors and medical staff who looked after me ;
- To the friends who accompanied me and gave me their support ;
- To the colleagues who helped me out at work and to the Human Resources Department of the European Investment Bank, which did all in its power to spare me administrative worries ;
- To fellow cancer patients I have met at the "Fondation contre le Cancer" and to its staff for their support and understanding.

What conclusions do I draw from this experience? Curiously enough, the medical part was the easiest to live with. Modern medicine has developed cures or palliatives to many cancers, especially when they are diagnosed early. Of course, many therapies have more or less unpleasant side effects, but what is a side effect compared to fighting for life?

For me, the most difficult part of recovery was getting over the fear of cancer. By that, I mean:

- the fear of the unknown,
- the fear of pain,
- the fear of getting a new cancer,
- the fear of being cheated of part of one's life,
- and of course, the fear of dying.

As the years have gone by, I have ceased to question why I have cancer; it is now a part of me. And there is no cure to fear except to look it in the face. The bottom line is that no-one wants to confront cancer. But once you have one, there is no choice but to live with it. So try to live well ! Cancer obliges you to focus on the essential and to disregard the secondary and unimportant. Cancer changes your time perspective: you no longer worry about what you might have planned to do in ten years' time. But it teaches you to recognise who and what is important in your life today.

If I am asked to describe how it is to live with cancer, I would reply that it is simply about getting on with your life and living it to the full, today, right here and now ! Thank you ladies and gentlemen.