

Témoignage en anglais sur le site de DICE

<https://digestivecancers.eu/patient-story/isabelle/>

Isabelle's story



Isabelle Chabrier is 56 years old, and lives in Paris, France. She shares her successful journey with pancreatic cancer.

Cancer is a common word in Isabelle's family. Her sister had breast cancer before her forties and her father had stomach cancer, therefore she followed through on [early diagnostic screenings](#). After ongenetic testing that helps identify inherited genetic mutations (changes) that can increase a person's risk for developing certain types of cancer, Isabelle learned she carries the [mutated BRCA2 gene](#). As a preventive measure, to avoid the risk of developing breast and/or ovarian cancer, she accepted a prophylactic removal of her ovaries (ovariectomy) and removal of her breasts (double mastectomy) at 49 years old.

In 2019, following the same healthy lifestyle, she decided to quit her long-term job and create her own company. During this time, she started suffering from strong back and stomach pain with unexplained weight loss (approximately 4 kg). She could barely eat. After 10 days of medical appointments and exams, Isabelle's final verdict was inoperable, locally advanced pancreatic cancer. "Locally advanced" cancers are intermediate-sized cancers that haven't spread to other organs but have invaded nearby (local) structures. When she heard the word "cancer" her world fell apart. She was terrified. Due to the length of tumor contact with the vessels (vascular involvement), another consequence of the BRCA2 mutation she carries surgery was not possible.

With this unexpected and surprising diagnosis, many questions arose. The main question was about her life expectancy. A question without a definitive answer, one that would depend on

her body's response to the treatment. Her doctor suggested chemo and radiotherapy as the first approach. After the second treatment, Isabelle was feeling better with no back or stomach pain, and she could eat.

After seven rounds of chemo and an exceptional response to the treatment, the CT scan showed a very shrunken tumor. These promising results allowed Isabelle to start a regimen of 30 rounds of radiotherapy twice a day combined with oral chemotherapy. Finally in July 2020, after these successful treatments, Isabelle went through the dreaded [Whipple procedure](#) (or pancreatoduodenectomy involves removal of the head of the pancreas, the duodenum, a part of small intestine, gall bladder and part of bile duct, and sometimes part of the stomach). The surgery went well, and though exhausted, Isabelle was happy to go back home. During this time couldn't bring herself to eat and drink; unable to leave her bed, she lost weight again. She was hospitalised to treat her severe dehydration and severe malnutrition.

Following her recovery from surgery and its aftermath, she underwent six rounds of adjuvant chemotherapy. Isabel received the last treatment in November 2020 and since then she has been in remission.

Announcing a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer to family and friends can be a challenging, emotional, and isolating task. Isabelle found it difficult to find others with the same diagnosis and share their experiences with, since the available information on pancreatic cancer prognosis can be overwhelming and anxiety-inducing, especially when the results may be predominantly negative or discouraging.

Pancreatic cancer is known for its dismal prognosis; however, Isabelle is a survivor and has no evidence of disease, living a normal and happy life. She documented her journey during treatment and published an inspiring book [“L'Indigestion – Journal intime de mon cancer du pancréas”](#), Éditions l'Harmattan.

Isabelle's story offers hope that a potentially terminal cancer can be managed. She acknowledges the support of the mental health team, the confidence in her doctors, her husband, family, close friends, and her cat Bandit. Isabelle's advice is: “Surround yourself with kind and caring people, be physically active (she walks regularly and is a yoga practitioner), sleep well, and be optimistic”. Isabelle encourages others diagnosed with pancreatic cancer to hold on to HOPE.