



Speaking from Experience

Bowel Cancer

Transcript for chapter 1 of 10: First signs

Debra: Well, I had trouble with haemorrhoids, actually, at the time. And some slight bowel habit changes, but I sort of hadn't taken much notice of those because I was three months pregnant at the time. So, I was just putting it down to the pregnancy, really. So I went in to just my GP and she said, "Oh, really a specialist needs to see those haemorrhoids." So, it moved on from then. So, I went to see a specialist and he said, "It's a bit more involved than that. You have a tumour and we're going to need to put you into hospital and do a biopsy and find out a bit more about it."

Peter: Well I had a very runny bowel. But the thing was, it was like diarrhoea. So, I was going to the loo about 10-15 times a day, but it was only very watery diarrhoea. Because of the blockage I had in the bowel, everything was building up and my body was starting to get poisoned by the build up.

Dennis: Around about Christmas '92 I was getting all these pains and a bit of diarrhoea and those sorts of things. I thought it might have been the Christmas rich foods and the Christmas spirit. So, I went to the doctors in January '93 and they put it down to possibly Irritable Bowel Syndrome the first month. Then it may have been a bowel infection, gastro a month after, in March. It wasn't until I went on a convention in America that there was a doctor who took me aside when I was feeling rather ill at one of the cocktail functions. He suggested that when I get back to Australia, that I have a full Colonoscopy. He thought there was more to it than what met the eye.

Paul: My daughter, Natasha, was diagnosed with bowel cancer when she was 17 years old and actually died when she was 19. Subsequent to that, all the immediate family were strongly advised to go for annual colonoscopy. Just to make sure that the same thing didn't reoccur.

Les: Where I'm working is about an hour and half's drive from home, on the other side of town. It was the clinic that our company used all the time. So, I decided to do a full check up and mention in the questionnaire that, yes, there's bleeding from the bowel. They did all the checks, but typically, they left that one for last. For some reason, I did all the checks over a period of 4, 5, 6 weeks and they finally came back and said, "Les, we want to check your blood pressure again." I said, "Hang on, what about this rear end problem?" So, they then set out, and it was about another 3 weeks before I could have a colonoscopy.

Caroline: I attended my folk dancing class on a Monday night and then on the Tuesday, had heaviness in the tummy. That persisted for about three days. So, I went to my GP, who diagnosed possible gastro. She suggested that I rest for a few days and come back to her if there wasn't any change to my condition.

John and Joy: I wasn't feeling very chipper and I thought I'd go to the doctors and told him I had a pain here [in abdomen]. I had an x-ray and that revealed the gall-stones. I had to go and see the surgeon and that was all right. A week before I was meant to go in, I went to the



toilet and when I had finished and I got up, I noticed the bowl was full of blood. I thought uh-oh. So, I went straight to my GP and he said, “I can’t see anything. Come back on Saturday with an empty bowel, and I’ll have a look.”

Caroline - By the time I came back, I had pain in the left quadrant – which indicated the colon – there was probably an infection there. I saw one of the partners in the medical centre, not my GP. She quickly ordered a range of tests: urine, faeces, blood and a pelvic ultrasound. They all happened very quickly.