

From Annamarie Krackow, PhD, RN, American Cancer Society Patient Resource Navigator, Nurse, and Lung Cancer Survivor

When my daughter suggested that I see a doctor for my cough, I resisted the notion, because I think I realized on some level that I wouldn't receive good news. I had tried to ignore the night sweats, loss of weight and shortness of breath, and I had convinced myself that the pale image in the mirror was due to poor lighting.

However, when the cough was so bad that I was annoying others, I finally had a chest film. The news was definitely bad – I had a large mass in my lung. After receiving a CAT scan, a needle biopsy of the mass was performed, and I received a diagnosis of lung cancer. Thankfully, the tumor responded quickly to chemotherapy, and the surgery that followed.

I do not advocate waiting as long as I did. I am a nurse and should have known better. Fortunately for me, an accurate and timely diagnosis by the pathologist allowed the oncologist to choose the appropriate therapy.

I have learned a costly lesson, and now, I live a much healthier lifestyle and have screenings when they are due. In the past nine years, I have enjoyed watching seven grandchildren grow, and I often think that without a proper diagnosis, I wouldn't even have known them.