

Lab21 Case Study 1: Joanne

Last year Joanne, 28, was diagnosed with aggressive cancer of uncertain primary origin in an NHS hospital. Based on the evidence, the most likely primary origin was breast – however, this could not be confirmed as no primary tumour could be found. In order to clarify the situation, Joanne and her partner agreed with their oncologist to order the CancerTYPE ID® test from Lab21 at their own cost. The result came back with 89.4% probability for breast cancer. Below is their account of Joanne’s journey.

“It took nearly 5 months for Joanne to be diagnosed with cancer. Following an initial needle biopsy of a raised lymph node under her armpit, the doctors suspected a lymphoma; perhaps Hodgkins Disease, but the subsequent surgical biopsy proved negative and they pretty much gave the all clear. It took a further agonising 3 months and another surgical biopsy for the doctors to finally reveal that it was definitely cancer, although this time they didn’t know what sort of cancer it was.

One of the most devastating aspects of this diagnosis was not knowing if there was any realistic chance of a cure. They explained that it was probably breast cancer, but that they really weren’t sure as no primary cancer was found (which apparently is very unusual in breast cancer cases). Also the cancer cells were very poorly differentiated, indicating a highly malignant disease.

We asked the surgeon whether there were any additional tests that could be carried out to establish what type of cancer was present, but the surgeon stated bluntly that “We have done everything that we have to do”.

In desperation, over the next few days we turned to the internet to look for people in the same situation and we came across the following website www.cupfoundjo.org. We found out that there was the possibility of getting a firmer diagnosis using the Cancer TYPE ID® test.

Now in the hands of the Oncologist, we explained that we wanted this test to be carried out. He was happy to go ahead and stated that it would be helpful.

Receiving the news that the cancer was almost certainly breast cancer came as a huge relief and it was psychologically a turning point. Importantly, we knew that the correct treatment was being offered and furthermore that a long term cure was possible. Without this test we would always be haunted by the knowledge that the cancer treatment offered might not be appropriate and that there might be no realistic cure.

I think that these tests should be offered free on the NHS, not least to reduce the incredible psychological stress suffered by people affected by cancer.”