

Blog on

BIOMARKERS & BREAST CANCER

Advocate Now to Grow, Empower Lead

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Frances Malinis
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Frances Malinis | MBC Thriver | ANGEL Advocate

I was diagnosed in January 2023 with triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), Grade 3, Stage IB. Through genetic testing, I learned that I carry a germline **BRCA2 mutation**, despite having no known family history of breast cancer on either side. This information profoundly shaped my treatment plan and long-term surveillance strategy—and it continues to guide my care today.

In 2023, I underwent neoadjuvant therapy (treatment before surgery) consisting of five cycles of chemotherapy combined with immunotherapy, followed by four cycles of chemotherapy with Neulasta (pegfilgrastim) support. After completing neoadjuvant treatment, a PET scan showed **no evidence of disease (NED)**.

In September 2023, I had a bilateral mastectomy, which demonstrated clear surgical margins and no lymph node involvement. Following surgery, I completed eight additional cycles of adjuvant immunotherapy, finishing treatment in April 2024. This treatment course aligned with a **KEYNOTE-522–based approach** for high-risk TNBC—a Phase 3 clinical trial demonstrating that combining chemotherapy with immunotherapy before surgery, followed by continued immunotherapy after surgery, improves outcomes for patients with TNBC.

Pathology and biomarker testing of the metastatic tissue demonstrated that the cancer remained triple-negative, results from a IHC test which is a type of biomarker test.

Biomarkers Guiding Care at Every Stage

At every stage of my breast cancer journey, comprehensive biomarker testing—including germline BRCA2 status, TNBC receptor classification, PD-L1 expression, and ongoing ER/PR/HER2 re-evaluation—has been essential. These results directly determine which treatments are appropriate and accessible, including **PARP inhibitors, immunotherapy, and other targeted therapies**.

When my cancer progressed to metastatic disease, biomarker testing once again guided the next phase of my care. **National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines**, which establish evidence-based standards for cancer treatment, emphasize therapy sequencing for metastatic TNBC based on biomarkers and prior treatments. Because of my germline BRCA2 mutation, I was an appropriate candidate for **PARP inhibitor therapy**.

I am currently being treated with Lynparza (olaparib), a PARP inhibitor—a treatment decision made possible by timely and comprehensive biomarker testing.

Impact of Biomarker-Driven Treatment

I am grateful to share that my most recent PET scan shows **stable disease with evidence of improvement** compared to prior imaging. Previously active mediastinal lymph nodes have resolved, and the lung nodules being monitored are smaller and significantly less metabolically active, with no new sites of disease identified. These findings indicate that my current treatment is effectively controlling the cancer.

This outcome reinforces the importance of matching the **right therapy to the right patient at the right time**, guided by biomarker-driven decision-making and ongoing disease monitoring. Biomarker testing has given me clarity, confidence, and a true sense of partnership in my care. It allowed my medical team to align treatment decisions with evidence-based guidelines—and helped me understand the rationale behind each step.

Just as importantly, biomarker testing helped me avoid therapies unlikely to benefit me, while focusing on treatments supported by strong clinical data.

“
Matching the right therapy to the right patient at the right time can change everything.
”

UNDERSTANDING BIOMARKER IN BREAST CANCER

Personalized Information for Better Care

In cancer care, biomarkers play a critical role in:



Helping detect cancer



Helping you understand your breast cancer



Guide personalized treatment plan



Monitoring treatment response

Why Comprehensive Biomarker Testing Matters

My experience underscores why comprehensive biomarker testing is essential for all patients—especially those diagnosed with aggressive subtypes like triple-negative breast cancer. Biomarker testing personalizes care, guides treatment sequencing, and opens doors to therapies that can meaningfully impact outcomes and quality of life.

Personalized medicine is not theoretical. It has shaped my treatment, my disease stability, and my hope moving forward. Because biomarkers have influenced every critical decision in my care, I feel strongly about educating others. Clear, accessible information about biomarker testing can change treatment options, improve outcomes, and provide direction during some of the most frightening moments of a patient's life.

Thanks to biomarker testing, I have been able to receive the best standard of care and access cutting-edge treatment options. This has given me hope as I continue living with metastatic triple-negative breast cancer.

Every patient deserves access to biomarker testing—and the hope it provides.

Thanks to biomarker testing, I have been able to receive the best standard of care and the most cutting-edge treatment options. This has given me hope to overcome my metastatic triple-negative breast cancer. Every patient deserves access to biomarker testing and the hope it provides.



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