

Beyond Pink Ribbons: One man's fight with breast cancer in America



IN THIS EPISODE

How do our healthcare *and health insurance* systems respond to patients with rare diseases? What about diseases that are stereotypically considered a “woman’s disease?” **Do all breast cancer patients - even men - receive the full range of care they need?** Join guest **Nilton Fonseca**, husband and father of three, with three decades of **domestic and international** construction engineering experience, **as he details his journey after being diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020.** In this first of two podcasts, Fonseca and host **Brenda Gazzar** discuss the unexpected and unacceptable hassles he faced.

SHOW NOTES

WE DISCUSS

What was happening in your life when you were diagnosed?

“...when I look back...I was very busy with work back then, life was going at a hundred-plus miles an hour...it never really occurred to me to pay more attention to my body, to what my body was saying.” – *Nilton Fonseca*

What was the first problem you had with your health insurer?

“...they only approved one breast [for imaging]. What the imaging center later told me is that typically these are done on two breasts and I think by default, the insurance company only approved one side. So that was a challenge in itself. The mammogram took a bit longer than necessary because when you go through an HMO, everything has to be pre-approved and because this is out of the routine, it's not a system-approved procedure.” – *Nilton Fonseca*

Did you experience any other hassles?

“...there is a genetic test, which is typically done. It's called the Oncotype DX. Those typically are routinely approved, you know, so that the oncologist can then sort of plan out the chemotherapy drug cocktails that you end up taking. But in my case, it was rejected on the basis that there's not enough data on men to justify this test being approved. So we appealed that and they rejected it.” – *Nilton Fonseca*

Helpful Links

[Men With Breast Cancer Need More Treatment Options and Access to Genetic Counseling](#), *U.S. Food & Drug Administration*

[The Blue in the Pink: Busting Myths About Male Breast Cancer](#)
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

[Men With a “Woman’s Disease”: Stigmatization of Male Breast Cancer Patients—A Mixed Methods Analysis](#), *American Journal of Men’s Health*

[How Does Breast Cancer Affect Black Men?](#), *Very Well Health*

Episode Transcript

Read the full episode transcript.

Guest Biography

Nilton Fonseca, a husband, and father of three, is a professional with over three decades of construction project experience domestically and internationally. He holds a degree in engineering and loves reading, traveling to new places and spending time with family and friends. He currently resides in the South Bay of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

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