



This is my journey through Breast Cancer

I think it goes without saying that it's been quite a rough two years for all of us. But who would've thought that being diagnosed with Breast Cancer wouldn't be the worst part of 2020! This last year has put a lot of things in perspective for me—as a deaf person, a teacher, a partner, a daughter, a sister, and a friend.

Let me introduce myself...my name is Izabella Lewandowski, and I am a breast cancer survivor.



This photo was captured right when I felt the lump on my breast

These last 18 months have provided one emotional roller coaster after another. Going through all this came with a heavy toll on my mind and my body and soul.

I was enduring multiple rounds of aggressive chemotherapy and six straight weeks of daily radiation and physical therapy. I also had holistic treatments, ongoing follow-ups, and not to mention the medications I'll need to take for the next ten years.

Each session left me completely exhausted. The good days seemed to be more infrequent the further along I got in my journey. I was suffering from the aftermath of all the treatments. My body and mind were adjusting to all the new changes, and I couldn't predict how I would feel day-to-day, sometimes hour-to-hour. I have endured over 100 appointments, not to mention all the driving back and forth for over 2,000 miles (Did I drive enough miles to reach the East Coast?!)



Through my chemo days

I finished my last treatment in early April, and as of my last round of tests, I'm in remission! That sentence alone should make me feel warm and fuzzy, but the struggles are something I won't have a shortage of for quite a while. Ongoing swelling in random places on my body and achy joints constantly remind me how simple life was before cancer. Waking up in the morning without pain, sleeping through the night without hot flashes, and even just making plans with friends without worrying about feeling up for it or not. These are the simple things I took for granted and miss dearly. It's hard to fathom how many lives cancer has taken and that it is such a privilege to be alive to continue the fight. Winning this battle was just the beginning; now, I'm trying to win the war.



I was celebrating at the beach after my treatments ended!

I have learned SO MUCH from this rough journey! But what gave me solace throughout all this was the human connection. It was the most significant presence in those difficult times. There were so many times I picked up my phone to see a message of support from so many people.

Not going to lie; my spirit has suffered dramatically at times. I lost my self-confidence (who wouldn't!). There were days I didn't want to continue. I felt like there was no light and the end of the tunnel. I was so lucky to have amazing people around me, I have such a strong army, and they have made such a difference in my life.



This was month four after my last chemo treatment.

There are no words to say how thankful I am for every one of them during the most challenging days of my life. I am forever grateful. In this quote, by "America's Got Talent," Seema Verma, who has a 2% chance of living due to her cancer, has stuck by me, *"You can't wait until life isn't hard anymore before you decide to be happy."*

Cancer came.

We fought.

I won!

mic drop



My dear friend surprised me with a photo shoot after my chemo days were over.

He wanted to boost my self-esteem, and I felt pampered and beautiful!

A perspective from Izabella's Esthetician

As well as Izabella sharing her story, I spoke with her esthetician who has given her skincare treatments and is Oncology certified to get a look inside the Estheticians' perspective as well. Her name is Hannah Nicholson of Bloom Beauty Bar in Vancouver, Washington. (@bloombeautybarpdxn on Instagram)

Starting my Esthetics journey, I knew it was more than just about skincare for me. I wanted to help my clients achieve healthy and beautiful skin that they love and provide a safe, inclusive and empathetic space. When planning to open my studio this year, I tried to think of every person who could come in my door.

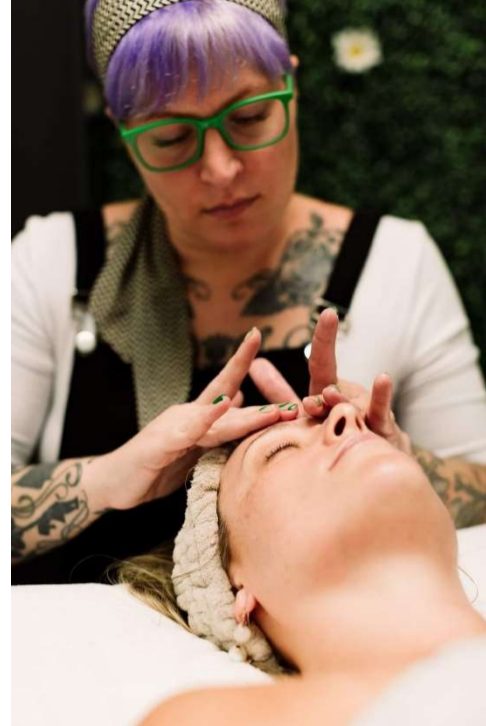
I went with GlyMed peels because they are colourblind. I'm currently working on my Fearless Beauties certification, and my service menu is all gender-neutral treatments. Becoming an Oncology trained Esthetician was another way for my services to include more people.

I researched to find a reputable course and went with Oncology Spa Solutions. The course was eye-opening and offered valuable information and resources that I used to make sure my clients would be comfortable, safe, and have available proper home care. You would never think about treatment, and space details with clients who haven't had cancer or been through treatment are now considered a standard for my studio. This includes avoiding overwhelming scents, using only nitrile gloves, and having cold/healthy drinks on hand. Even after the course was over, I had a fantastic binder full of information that I could refer to any time I needed. There's a lot to know when it comes to working with clients who deal with cancer, but I feel pretty confident after taking the course to help and be there for my clients.

The course first took me through the basics of the various types of cancer and the steps of treatment that a client may or may not go through. From there, I learned how the aspects of their diagnosis and treatment plan affect how I'm able to treat their skin, touch them, and when I'm able to during the treatment. I learned how CBD products work well for those with a compromised immune system and skin sensitivities specific to cancer treatment. The course also went over the importance of having resources available to take some guesswork out of their new daily lives. This might include having a referral for a permanent makeup artist who does nipple reconstruction or carrying everyday products as I do, such as deodorant, bath bombs, nail polishes, and lip balms that are safe to use. Another aspect of the course I found helpful and important was how it went over verbiage that is appropriate when speaking to clients who have had cancer in regards to their cancer. It was also helping me create a treatment that is specifically for those clients. I keep the price of my "Comfort Treatment," which is essentially my "Cannabliss Treatment" for those who have been through cancer, at a price point almost half of the amount. I learned the importance of being aware of the toll their skin has been through going through treatment and the financial cost as well.

Izabella was my first Oncology client, and we hit it off from the start. I've enjoyed getting to know her and feel pretty lucky to be her Esthetician. I'm proud of how far she's come and how strong she is. Had I not become Oncology trained, I wouldn't have had the joy of getting to treat her skin. Clients like her are why I love being an Esthetician. They are so grateful for the life they are living and have so much to teach me that goes beyond the skin. Working on Oncology clients

helps me to slow down and really be in the moment, plus they really keep my thinking hat on since I must be that much more aware of what I'm doing, what I'm using, and how my touch is. I'm more aware and I really try to keep the little details in mind now for all my clients. Oncology training was much more valuable than I could imagine, and I highly recommend it to any Esthetician, even if they don't want to specialize in it, offering Oncology services, or promote themselves as being trained. It never hurts to keep learning and broaden your knowledge.



If you or someone you know is affected by cancer and you'd like to submit their information for Marie's Gift, please contact your Account Manager. They will send you oncology-safe and renewing products for their skin.

If you have any questions and would like to speak to one of our friendly Master Aestheticians in your area please email support@glymedplusaustralia.com.au

Written by Izabella Lewandowski