



THE RONNIE LIPPIN PATIENT SUPPORT AND NAVIGATION PROGRAM



After his experience navigating the complexities of the medical system during his wife's breast cancer treatment, PR mogul Dick Lippin decided to establish a program to help others maneuver through a similar journey. With Tower's help, he established the Ronnie Lippin Cancer Support and Navigation Program at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. This program helps individuals from the low-income neighborhoods surrounding the USC Health Sciences Campus maximize their chances for survival. By assisting these individuals in gaining access to the right doctors, the program explains treatment options in a culturally appropriate fashion, helps them understand their insurance benefits, and steers them toward support groups. Below is a case study example of one such survivor, Alex*, whose life was changed because of the help he received from the Ronnie Lippin Cancer Support Navigator—Ghecemy Lopez.

After surviving early stage prostate cancer many years ago, Alex believed his brush with cancer was over. Yet, in May of 2016, despite being asymptomatic for years, he learned his body was riddled with a rare and metastatic form of Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Immediately, he was put on an aggressive regimen of chemotherapy, but his body's response to the treatment was not what the doctors had hoped for. Consequently, his doctors opted to switch gears and prescribe an alternative medication, which current research has shown to be effective for Alex's specific form of lymphoma. While the family was excited to learn about this promising and potentially life-saving new treatment option, a seemingly insurmountable barrier hampered their optimism—the cost of the co-payment for the drug.

Desperate to find a solution, Alex's son went to the Ronnie Lippin Navigation and Support Program at USC/LA County Hospital

for assistance. He explained to Ghecemy Lopez that even with his parents' social security pensions, their combined family income was only around \$20,000 a year. And even though Alex had Medicare coverage (federal insurance), the remaining \$3,500 copayment for the prescribed medication was unaffordable, to say the least. Ghecemy immediately jumped into action, helping Alex apply for additional state assistance (MediCal). If approved, this assistance had the potential to significantly reduce the cost of the copayment. Additionally, she identified other financial aid resources, and submitted applications for medication funding on Alex's behalf.

Two weeks later, Alex received news that the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society approved a grant for \$5,000 towards his copayment. He called Ghecemy in tears, overcome with relief and eager to share the good news and express his gratitude. Ghecemy continues to stay in touch and support Alex through the continuous ups and downs of treatment, offering Spanish-speaking educational and emotional support referrals to Alex, his wife, who is his main caregiver, and their children.

**This name has been changed to protect the privacy of the patient.*

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