
MEET THE WOMAN WHO WAS THE FIRST TO CONNECT DES AND CANCER

The diagnosis was brutal. Seventeen-year old Sheila Stone-Brennan had clear cell adenocarcinoma of the vagina. Her doctors were mystified. They hadn't dealt with this cancer before and had no idea why this teenaged girl in Syracuse, NY, developed it.

But that was an easy question for her mother to answer. After two successful pregnancies, Mrs. Penny Stone started spotting while carrying Sheila. So she was prescribed DES in high doses through pills and injections. Mrs. Stone blamed DES for her daughter's cancer right from the start. She had no doubt.

According to Sheila, her mother rarely took drugs, so the memory of all the DES she'd ingested stuck in her mind. But, while treating physician Dr. Sydney Doolittle and gynecologic oncologist Dr. Michael Jordan refused to pay attention, Mrs. Stone refused to let it drop. There were numerous opportunities to mention DES through the gru-



eling chemotherapy, surgery and cobalt radiation treatments that Sheila endured to treat the aggressive cancer. One particular conversation sticks in her mind. Sheila was lying on the couch after a chemo treatment and heard her mother on the phone stridently making the case against DES.

Eventually Mrs. Stone wore down Dr. Jordan, who finally broached the subject of prenatal DES exposure to Dr. Arthur Herbst and Dr. Howard Ulfelder. They were handling a cluster of similar cancer cases in Boston. And the rest is history. A check with the other mothers found the DES connection.

"I happened to be with mom when Dr. Herbst called to acknowledge that thanks to her persistence the DES link had officially been made and she'd been right all along. Mom was teary-eyed when she got off the phone," says Sheila.

"She was tenacious in the face of those who didn't believe. I'm proud of her for fighting so hard when others might have given up. But she knew, she just knew, that the DES she'd been prescribed was the cause of my cancer. Mom would be proud today to know she is recognized as the first person to make that connection!"

DES VOICE