In 2013, after months of unexplained joint pain and no diagnosis, Ivy Elkins was told she had stage four lung cancer when doctors discovered a mass in her elbow. Faced with great uncertainty, and a young family at home, Ivy was left to determine next steps with the reality of a cancer that had already metastasized to her bones and her brain.

The complexities of cancer treatment are many. Genetics, comorbidities, treatment history, and even geography are all layers of consideration when it comes to a cancer patient’s access to treatment and to clinical trials. It is common for cancers to eventually “outsmart” a drug, leaving patients with treatment resistance and the risk of progression. Too often people die waiting for access to a treatment that will help make progress against their particular cancer due to challenges with insurance coverage for doctor-prescribed care. This makes treatment timing paramount for cancer patients, and Ivy’s story speaks volumes to that fact.

In Ivy’s case, her first treatment was a daily pill which allowed her to maintain a typical, active lifestyle. After three years it stopped working and she and her doctor needed to decide on next steps. Fortunately for Ivy, osimertinib had been approved just months before through the accelerated approval pathway, with breakthrough therapy and priority review designations. Similar to her prior treatment, osimertinib is an oral, once-daily treatment indicated for non-small-cell lung carcinomas with a specific mutation, and Ivy was a match.

After several years on osimertinib, Ivy’s course of treatment hit another milestone. Because of Ivy’s success with osimertinib treatment, she was now a candidate for surgical intervention. Today, almost two years since her surgery, Ivy is living with no evidence of disease, something she and her family never imagined possible upon her initial diagnosis.

Ivy has used the last eight years to advocate for herself and cancer patients here in the U.S. and abroad. Ivy co-founded EGFR Resisters, to project a strong voice that encourages new research and clinical trials in this field. Ivy is well aware of how fortunate she is, and she works tirelessly to connect those in the cancer community with each other for support and with information to help educate people as they work with their providers to chart their course for the ups and downs of cancer treatment. Without the accelerated approval pathway, Ivy’s cancer could have progressed too far and made her ineligible for the next treatment. Collectively, the timing of approval for osimertinib and treatment advances have saved her life.

“New treatments are desperately needed for cancer patients who have developed resistance to currently approved medications. I was fortunate to have time on my side thanks to accelerated approval but too many others are literally dying waiting to see what could work for them.”

Ivy Elkins
Lung Cancer
Evanston, IL

#FacesofAcceleratedApproval
fightchronicdisease.org/resources/acceleratedapproval