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# Health Assessment Helped Detect Her Breast Cancer At An Early Stage



**Thanks to MidMichigan Health’s free online breast health assessment, April Karns’ breast cancer was detected early, allowing her to have a faster, easier treatment and recovery.**

The free online breast health assessment offered by MidMichigan Health helped April Karns find her breast cancer at Stage 1. Discovering it at the most easily treatable stage meant a faster, easier recovery and less disruption to her family life and work.

With a family history of cancer and dense breast tissue, Karns had been careful to get a mammogram every year since age 40. “The mammograms did not show anything,” she said. Last year, when a Facebook friend posted a link to a free, five-minute online breast health assessment, she paused for a look.

Karns said she’s a “Facebook fanatic,” but in real life she’s also an internal auditor for the State of Michigan. Would she take the assessment?

“I deal with fraud all day long, and I tell people at work, ‘Don’t click on that link. Don’t give out that information,’” she said. “But I felt comfortable taking the online assessment, because it was from MidMichigan, an organization that I’ve dealt with for a long time and feel I can trust.”

At the end of the assessment, instead of the expected online pop-up with her score and perhaps some general advice, Karns was asked for her name and email so that she could be contacted.

She was surprised to receive a phone call from MidMichigan’s Breast Cancer Nurse Navigator Jessica Fodrocy, R.N., B.S.N., C.B.C.N., C.N.-B.N., who works at the Center for Women’s Health at MidMichigan Medical Center - Midland. “I already knew I was at high risk, but she told me something new,” Karns said.

“She explained that now, for high-risk patients, they’re doing breast MRIs. I hadn’t heard that,” she said. “She talked to me about the pros and cons of having the test, and we found that my insurance would cover it.”

When the MRI of Karns’ right breast showed a suspicious spot, the care process intensified. “From that point on, every step flowed perfectly,” she said. “They did an ultrasound first, because that makes the biopsy easier, then the biopsy came back and showed it was cancer.”

Karns said she would probably have been upset, but her mother, sister, son and husband have all had cancer. “I just kicked into attack mode and told myself, ‘Until they tell me there’s something to worry about, I’m just going to keep going and do what they tell me I have to do.’”

She was glad to have Fodrocy’s support, especially early on. “She’s calm and very straightforward, very focused through every step. She called me up all the time and was very proactive in making sure I was being taken care of.”

For the surgery, Fodrocy referred Karns to General Surgeon Kelly Wirsing, M.D., medical director of MidMichigan’s Breast Health Program located at the Center for Women’s Health at MidMichigan Medical Center – Midland. Fodrocy met her at the doctor’s office and stayed for the whole appointment. Dr. Wirsing was also ready to give Karns all the time and information she needed to make a decision about her next step. “She made me feel like she had no place else to be for the rest of the day as she explained every kind of breast cancer surgery,” Karns said.

Both women were comfortable with Karns’ decision: a lumpectomy, followed by radiation. After the surgery, she met with Medical Oncologist Michel Hurtubise, M.D., to confirm that she did not need chemotherapy, and could move forward with radiation.

To minimize driving, Karns decided to have the radiation treatment closer to home in Corunna. She also has physical therapy to control edema in her arm that resulted when lymph nodes were removed during surgery. She is also having genetic counseling and genetic testing, along with some family members.

“Thank goodness for Facebook, MidMichigan’s breast health assessment and the MRI. I told all my girlfriends at work about the MRI and talking with your doctor if you have dense breast tissue,” Karns said.

“I could have been looking at a double mastectomy, with months of chemotherapy and radiation. But I took the assessment and, with the new tools out there, my cancer was caught at Stage 1. I had full service from MidMichigan, and it’s been wonderful. It’s been the best possible scenario.”

MidMichigan Health currently offers seven free online health assessments. These profilers take approximately five minutes to complete, and help individuals determine their heart, breast, lung and colorectal health, risk for PAD, assess their hip and knee pain and learn weight loss recommendations. Those interested in evaluating their health, may visit [www.morelifemorehealth.org](http://www.morelifemorehealth.org). Those who would like more information about the Breast Health Program at MidMichigan Medical Center – Midland’s Center for Women’s Health may visit [www.midmichigan.org/breast](http://www.midmichigan.org/breast).