

Cancer journey inspires resident to make difference in comfort and support

Ariz Bhimani was at the start of his third year of university when he felt a lump on his right testicle.

Aged just 20, the Civil Engineering student, following a series of tests, was slated for cancer surgery the following week, resulting in a right orchiectomy. A procedure that almost invariably comes with considerable pain and discomfort, the Aurora resident didn't just endure this experience, but set about to use his engineering expertise to aid patient experiences going forward.

The result is BRFZY, recovery boxer briefs and anatomical gel packs, to help individuals recovering from and living with pelvic injuries.

On Thursday, Bhimani's innovative product won the support of judges and \$10,000 through the RBC Rock My Business Youth Entrepreneur Award program.

Now in its fourth year, the RBC initiative supports Futurpreneur Canada's workshop series where participants are then able to apply for the grant to support their dream business

Bhimani says the support from the program will help he and his team cover the cost of obtaining their Class 1 Medical Device Establishment License and other essential certifications in the areas of quality and care.

"This means a lot," he told The Auroran on Thursday, just hours after the awards had been announced. "It means that people who went through something I have gone through [will] have the support they need through their recovery. Right now, there is nothing out there that's able to do what my product can do. Getting the name out there and launching the product soon means everything. It gives people even the mental support they need to know they're being taken care of, even after they get home from the hospital."

Now 25 with a clean bill of health, Bhimani's cancer journey is never far from his mind.

"It changed my life," he recalls of his diagnosis. "I was in the hospital having surgery within a week and then, less than a year later, the cancer had metastasized into my left lung. That is when I was put into three rounds of chemotherapy from September 2020 through to November, all during COVID, too. After that, I had surgery in my left lung to remove the nodule that was in there and since then I finished my fourth year after taking a whole year off and started to work on BRFZY."

"Right after my right orchiectomy I felt a lack of support and compression from my underwear and I experienced a significant amount of chafing on that surgical site. This led to a lot of pain and discomfort and I had a lot of trouble getting a cold pack down onto my scrotum. I also had a lot of fluid build-up on my incision and that had to be drained probably three times in the ER. Just out of that experience, I had enough. It had been going on for a while. It was a prolonged recovery. I decided I didn't want to feel this way anymore, so I used my civil engineering educational background to develop this product myself and a whole lot of other people. It's developed into a product that is extremely versatile for people facing surgeries like I did and more than that now, we got pockets for the hips, the back, and further down onto the thighs. Whether you have a hernia, orchiectomy or a hip replacement, it's going to help you."

With support from RBC in hand, Bhimani says he hopes he can get the product out to market by next April. In the meantime, in addition to the work he is going to do to bring BRFZY, a play on "Boxer Brief" and "Breezy," a nod to their cooling function, to fruition, he would like to continue to stress the importance of men's health.

"Though testicular cancer is very rare, it has changed my life and I can say now it has been for the better, but that entire process that ever since diagnosis it has been very tough," he says. "It's turned my life upside down, so for all the men out there, they really should be checking themselves and talking to their doctors about how they can go about that, as well as potentially even getting a baseline on their hormones."

?Something I learned was extremely important in knowing that I am recovering properly from not only the removal of my right testicle, but from the chemotherapy itself. I am still facing some of those affects, so just knowing where you are with your health should anything happen is a big advantage, I think.?

By Brock Weir