

MY NAME IS CHANTELLE ASCIAK

I was diagnosed with a
**RARE PRIMARY LARGE
MEDIASTINAL B-CELL NON
HODGKIN LYMPHOMA**



Symptoms before diagnosis



Tuesday 6th September – still no clue I had lymphoma



Friday 9th September at RMH emergency

February – August

- Misdiagnosed 6 times with chest infections.
- Respiratory clinic suspected post-COVID despite negative PCR tests.
- Symptoms were largely invisible.

Late August

- Symptoms became visibly worse.
- Ambulance assessed it as anxiety, not an emergency.
- Diagnosed with a 7th chest infection via telehealth.

Two Weeks Later

- A young GP ordered an urgent CT scan.
- That decision saved my life.

Symptoms: Persistent cough - Chest pressure - Breathlessness - Exhaustion - Couldn't lie flat - swelling progressed quickly.

September 2022

8 September: CT Scan

9 September: Initial GP lymphoma diagnosis 7.3cm x 12cm lymphoma from GP and was rushed to Royal Melbourne Hospital

Treatment/s before CAR-T



RMH ICU 11/09/2022 - 14/09/2022

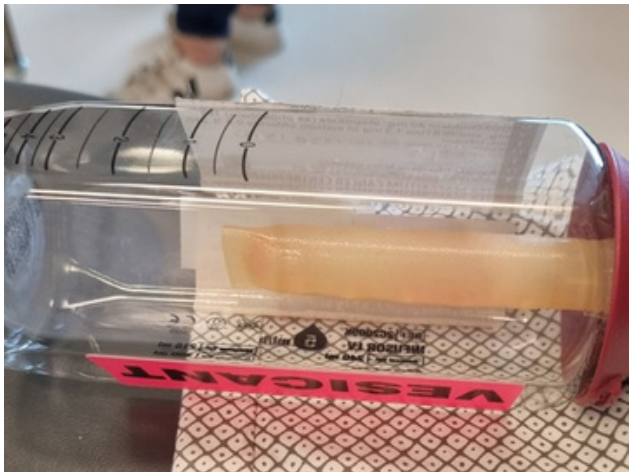
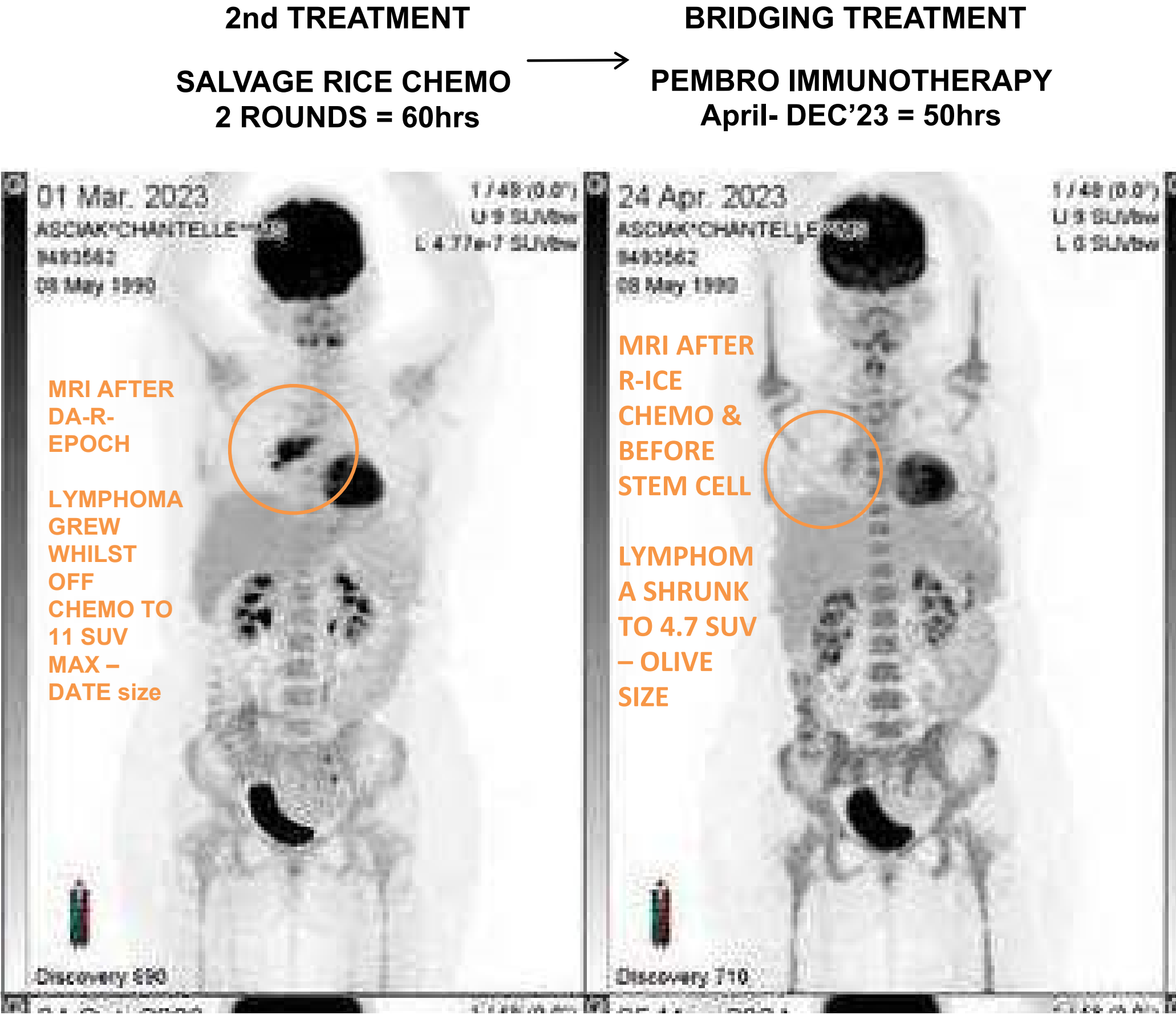
1st TREATMENT
DA-R-EPOCH CHEMO
7 ROUNDS = 700 hrs

MRI AFTER
2ND CYCLE
OF DA-R-
EPOCH

LYMPHOMA
SHRUNK,
CHEMO WAS
WORKING



Treatment/s before CAR-T



WHY CAR-T CELL? BECAUSE WE EXHAUSTED ALL OTHER TREATMENT OPTIONS

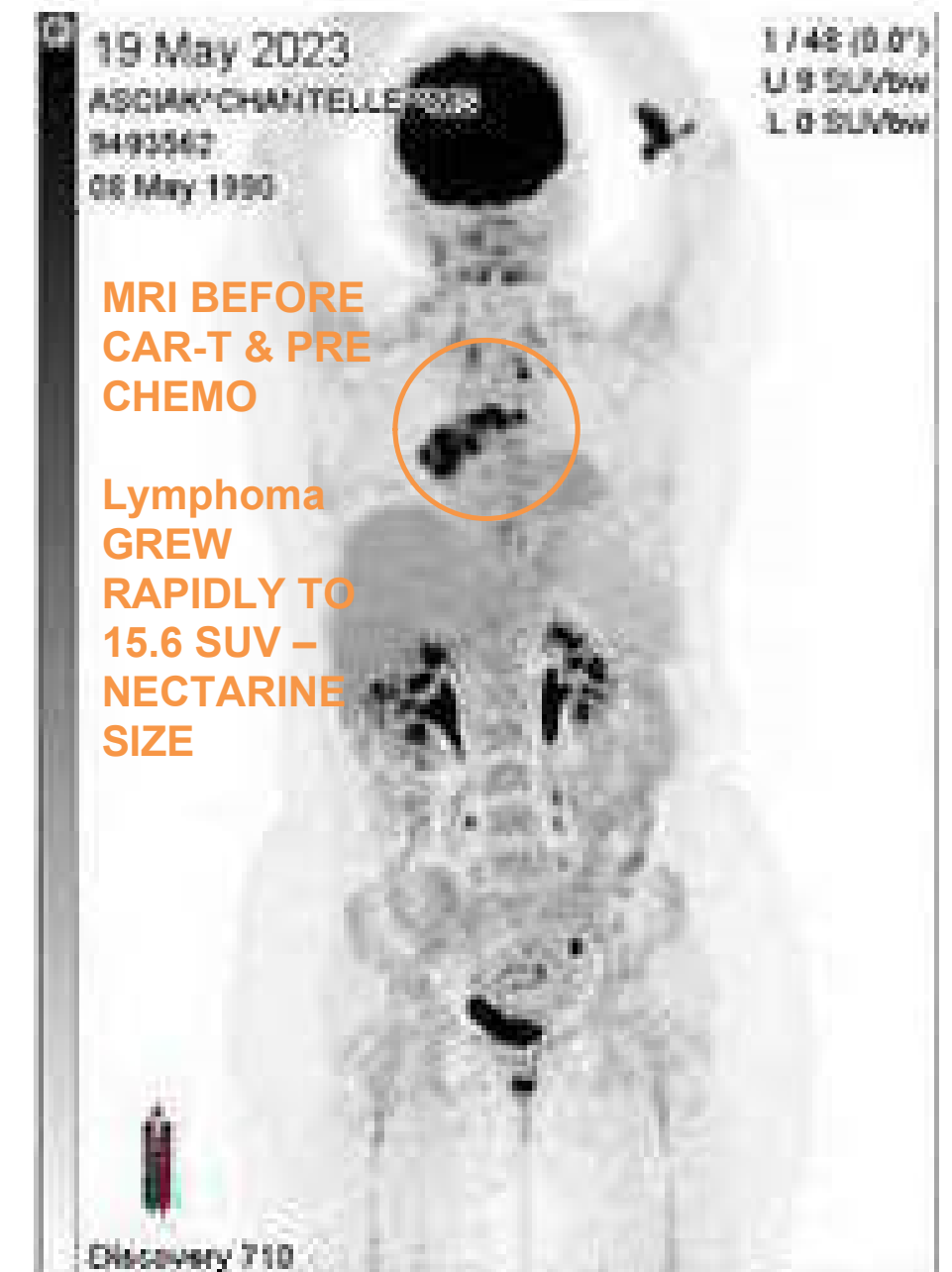
PREPARATION

- 2 x Neurological test with neurologists
- Learn about ICANS
- Physical tests with physio (Completed when preparing for stem cell)
- Still continued with bridging
- T-CELLS retrieved on MAY 1ST 2023

MRI before CAR-T & PRE CHEMO

Lymphoma rapidly grew to 15.6 size of nectarine

- May 24th 2023 - Started pre CAR-T chemo (around 12 hours) Cells were arriving earlier than expected.
- TOTAL HOURS of treatment: 822 HOURS



CAR-T IN-PATIENT PETER MAC



ICANS assessment tool		Date of Birth	
Immune effector Cell-Associated Neurotoxicity Syndrome			
DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME
3/6/23	2315	3/6/23	0015
3/6/23	0015	3/6/23	0100
3/6/23	0100	3/6/23	0220
3/6/23	0220	3/6/23	0315
3/6/23	0315	3/6/23	0410
3/6/23	0410	3/6/23	0530
3/6/23	0530	3/6/23	0620
3/6/23	0620	3/6/23	0800
3/6/23	0800	3/6/23	0900
3/6/23	0900	3/6/23	1000
3/6/23	1000	3/6/23	1100
3/6/23	1100	3/6/23	1120
3/6/23	1120	3/6/23	1200
3/6/23	1200	3/6/23	1400
3/6/23	1400	3/6/23	1600
3/6/23	1600	3/6/23	1759
3/6/23	1759		

26/05/2023 DAY 0- T CELLS INFUSED

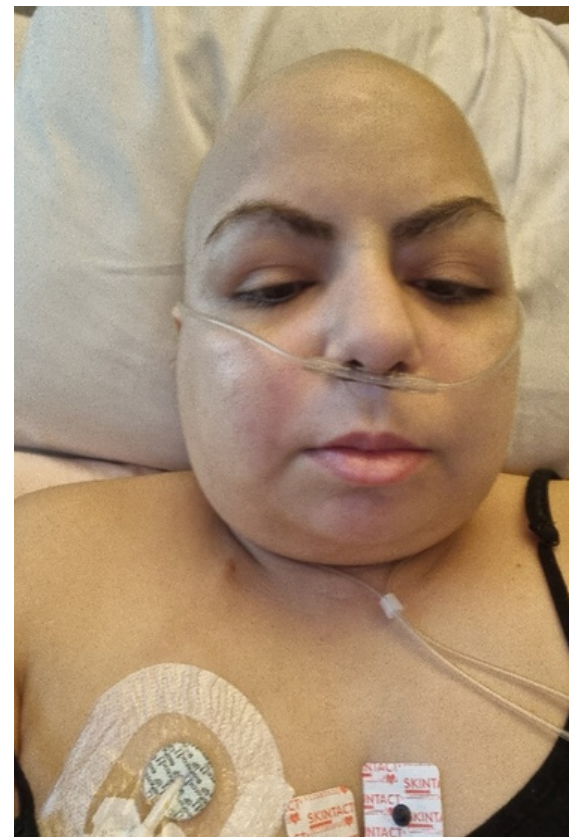
29/05/2023 DAY 3 - FEVER HIT

01/06/2023 DAY 6 - ICU LOW BLOOD

PRESSURE

02/06/2023 DAY 7 - NEUROTOXICITY HIT BACK TO ICU

10/06/2024 DAY 15 - LEAVE PETER MAC



**OUR 90 DAY POST CAR-T
PET STILL SHOWED
NON-EXISTENT
LYMPHOMA BUT STILL
ACTIVITY SHOWING UP.**

**To be sure we needed a
biopsy. The only way they
could do this, due to
location was by doing
Micro-robotic surgery.
This operation occurred
on September 6th 2023**

**September 15th 2023
I was told I was officially
in Remission!**

**MRI POST CAR-T
DAY 30**

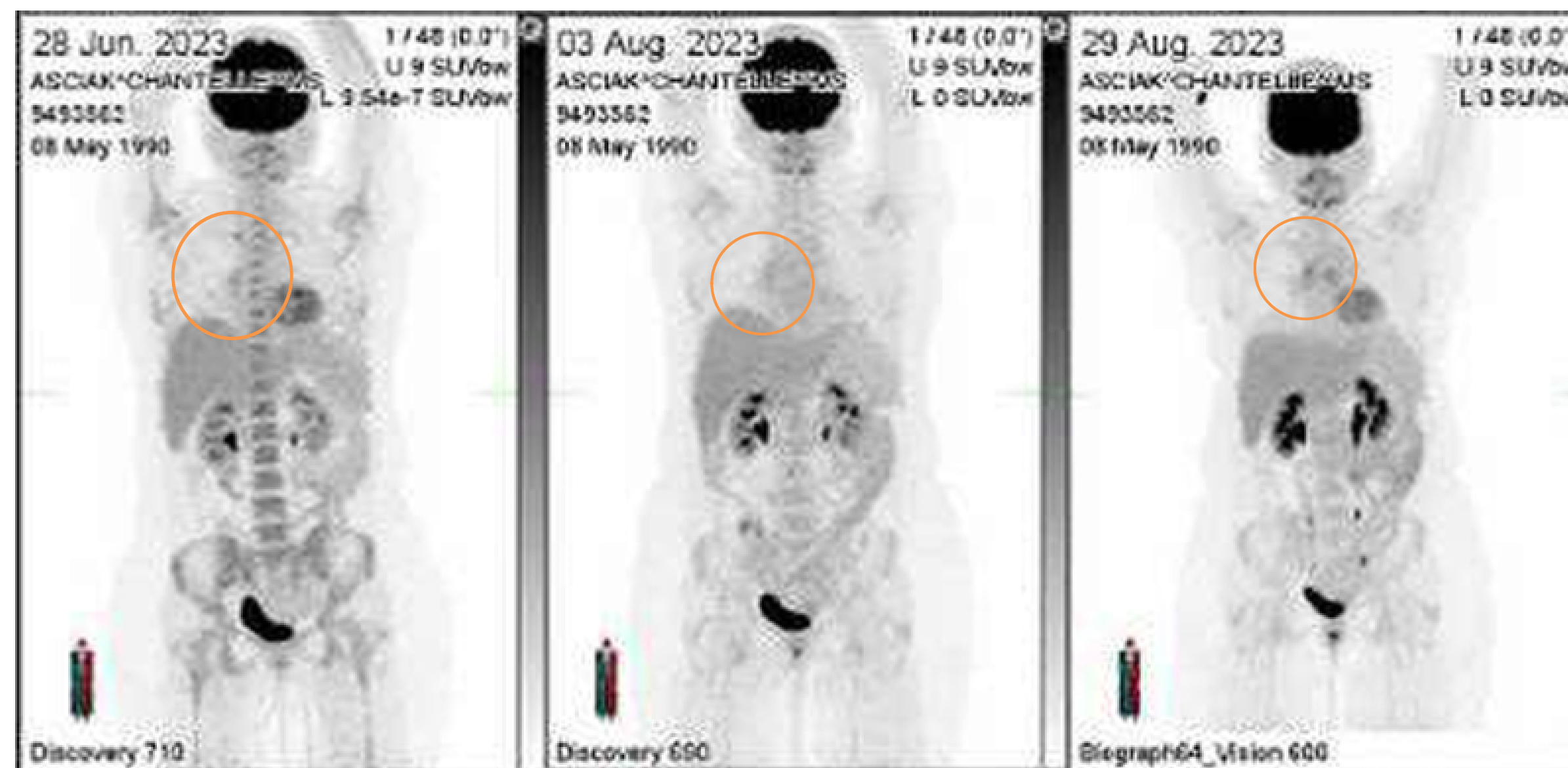
**LYMPHOMA WAS STILL
VISIBLE**

**MRI POST CAR-T
DAY 60**

**CAR-T SLIGHTLY
VISIBLE**

**MRI POST CAR-T
DAY 90**

**LYMPHOMA WAS NON
EXISTENT BUT STILL
ACTIVITY PRESENTED**



REMISSION doesn't mean recovery

3 months post-remission

- keyhole surgery to remove a pre-existing fibroid
- Immune system still suppressed from CAR T - caught COVID

Jan 2024 - rushed to Peter Mac, diagnosed with pneumonitis; pembrolizumab stopped

Feb 2024 - re-admitted to Peter Mac with pneumonia, back on steroids

May 2024 - lungs collapsed the day before my birthday; COVID still active, severe infection and fluid on my lungs
rushed to RMH

Recovery brought exhaustion, brain fog, and grief I'd bottled up through treatment

Months on high-dose steroids - 15kg weight gain, took a toll on my mental health and sense of self

Oct 2025 - just past 2 years in remission, new pain and coughing; CT shows tissue wrapped around my aorta
Bronchoscopy inconclusive → thoracic surgery: no lymphoma, just scar tissue and inflammation

Today: officially 3 years in remission

Three's later...

2022



2026



- 💛 Still in remission
- 🧠 Chemo brain is real
- ⚡ Fatigue remains
- 🌱 Still rebuilding my life



BIG THANK YOU

- My haematologist, Professor Michael Dickinson
- Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
- Royal Melbourne Hospital
- Every healthcare professional
- My family and friends
- Every patient who keeps fighting

**CAR-T didn't just give me more time.
It gave me a future.**