

RARE DISEASE STRIP-TEASE

Bringing SEXY back to WOMEN with CANCER



Woman Living with Genetic Brain Tumor Empowers Self and Others by Performing Burlesque

Women living with cancer are never portrayed as sexy. Lady Miss Iris discovered belly dancing and burlesque after brain surgery to reclaim physical strength, reconnect with her body, and feel beautiful again. Lady said burlesque dancing “helped me start liking my body again, after feeling betrayed by my body.”

Despite her mother’s early death from VHL at age 44, Lady was unaware she had the disease until 2002 when she felt “pins and needles” in her right hand and was unable to stand for long periods of time. A visit to the ER revealed a brain tumor, cysts in her kidneys and pancreas, and a diagnosis of VHL.

She underwent brain surgery. Doctors placed a graft in her spinal column, but left most of her tumor intact because of the sensitive brain tissue surrounding it. “Given my age and personality, the doctors thought removing the tumor had more potential to do harm than good,” she said. “[I’m] smart, funny, and fabulous. Why am I gonna give that up for brain surgery?”

The surgery took a toll on her body at age 28. “I was really angry at my body a lot,” she said. As soon as she could leave the house, Lady started taking belly dancing classes. She built strength and muscle-tone she had lost and felt “feel like I could take action and control of my body.”

She began performing burlesque and started picking up momentum and fans. She was recently featured in The Providence Journal, RI Monthly and on “Rhode Island’s Amazing Women” for RI PBS.

ABOUT VHL

Von Hippel-Lindau (VHL) is a genetic condition where abnormal blood vessel growth can cause cancer & other health problems. VHL occurs in every ethnic group, everywhere in the world. Most people with VHL will begin having clinically significant issues in their teens or twenties.

With better diagnostic techniques and imaging scans (CT and MRI) to catch early stage tumors, and better treatments for dealing with tumors, the outlook for people with VHL is better each year. There still is no cure for VHL. Donations to the VHL Family Alliance help fund research toward a cure.

Lady teaches a burlesque workshop, for all women, college students to grandmothers, named Editor’s Choice for the Providence Phoenix Best of Rhode Island 2005. With her medical condition and nerve damage to her right hand, Lady encourages women in her class to take control of their bodies, whatever their condition. “You have to believe you are beautiful,” she said. “I want to encourage you to take control of your own smoking hotness.”

Lady, now age 33, has been asymptomatic since surgery and is being followed by a National Institutes of Health study. She is currently working on a full-length performance piece entitled “The Thing That Ate My Brain ... Almost.”

CONTACT

If you would like more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Lady Miss Iris, 800-767-4845, ext 718, or Joyce Graff, 800-767-4845, ext 710.

MOST PEOPLE WONDER
IF THEY’LL GET CANCER
... WE WONDER **WHEN**



The Cancer Research Fund and the VHL Family Alliance International are dedicated to improving diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life for individuals and families affected by von Hippel-Lindau disease and related tumor conditions. They provide information in 8 languages, fund research, and help connect people with the best available medical information.