

FRIDAY 07 DECEMBER

I reached the halfway mark today – four chemotherapy treatments down and four to go. Well, that's the A and C drugs. I'll still have to have the Herceptin administered intravenously, but apparently that one doesn't have the dreadful side effects.

One of the drugs made my sinuses feel blocked and my eyes sensitive, so I'm relieved to see the end of that! There's something else I'd be happy to see the end of and that is hot flushes, but this could be more to do with menopause and giving up Hormone Replacement Therapy rather than the chemotherapy drugs. In my youth (and ignorance) I wondered why some women made such a big deal out of 'feeling a bit hot'. Little did I know that God was listening, and decided to teach me a lesson!

From the moment menopause hit in my late forties, I suffered from flushes which left me throwing my clothes and my sanity out the window! Not only did I suffer hot flushes strong enough to power a small European country in the depth of winter, but the accompanying 'brain freeze' became serious enough to affect my work performance. It was after this that I regretted my previous insensitivity to other women, and rushed to the doctor. She immediately started me on HRT (Helluva Reliable Tablet) and I had been worshipping at its altar every morning since. But with the suggested link between Hormone Replacement Therapy and breast cancer by some areas of the medical profession, I was told to stop taking it as soon as the cancer was diagnosed.

And so the flushes were back with a vengeance! And it wasn't only me suffering. HoN often spends part of each night shivering and curled in the foetal position due to the bedcovers being hurled to the end of the bed in one of my roasting frenzies. When he can bear the cold no longer, he then sends out a search party for the quilt and bemoans this particular change of life - his, this time!

To cope with the daytime flushes (twenty one at last count) I decided to take a leaf from my mother's book. I could remember her having a small mint green battery operated fan she would use at the first sign of a bead of perspiration. This caused me acute embarrassment when I was younger (the fanning, not the perspiring) as people stared when Mum 'revved up', but it's amazing how these inhibitions disappear as we turn into our mothers.

The twenty first century version of the hand held fan was a very different animal. It was sleek, black and compact and even gave you the option of programming messages which would then flash across the blades when the fan was turned on. I couldn't help wondering who decided that if you didn't get enough people

staring at you when you whipped out your battery operated toy in public, you could grab their attention with a few well chosen words.

I wasn't going to bother with the message function, but the temptation for a bit of creativity got to me in the end. And what parent doesn't like to embarrass their children in public. Yes, too tempting to ignore!

'I'm a Hottie' was the first message I programmed in. It was really stating the bleeding obvious because each morning, as I looked in the mirror, I knew, without a shadow of a doubt, the bald woman with lopsided boobs and no eyebrows would send the male population into a frenzy!

'A Royal Flush' was the next flashing message. This one was suggested by my youngest. Not, I hasten to add, because he thought I carried myself with a regal bearing. He just happens to be heavily into online poker at the moment.

'My Fan Club' was the final message. No-one has asked to join at this stage, but if they're interested, membership is free. Just quietly, I'll pay you! And I think I better stock up on batteries as well. My aunt saw me fanning myself the other day and frowned. 'You poor darling! I think you'll find this runs in the family, dear. I still have flushes.' And she's ninety four!

