



## Unit 4: Appendix D

### Challenging the Immune System: diagnosis and understanding the disease

#### Case 2: Stacey- a college student feeling worn out from more than just her studies and parties

##### **Part 1: Pain in the neck**

*In her junior year of college, 21 year old Stacey was living it up with her friends in an off-campus housing complex and taking advanced psychology classes that she loved. The motto of the four girls living together was “work hard and play harder.” They had been living by this motto from the beginning of their college life together, but it wasn’t until this first semester of junior year that Stacey noticed something about her appearance that alarmed her. She woke up with a huge lump in her neck. That day she stopped by the campus health services and the nurse practitioner thought that lymph node must have been swollen because Stacey was run down from lack of sleep and from catching a cold earlier that month. She had a cough and the swelling of the lump was painful, but she decided she could handle it and needed to get home. The size of the lump got better within the week, and she decided to put it out of her mind and get back to studying for her upcoming midterm exams.*

*The problem was that the lump never completely disappeared and Stacey noticed several times over the next few months it would swell slightly. It wasn’t until her skin began to itch fiercely and her cough wouldn’t stop that she decided to head back to the doctor. Since winter break was next week, she told her mom to schedule an appointment with the family doctor.*

*Upon returning home from first semester, Stacey headed to the doctor. They performed a chest X-ray and unfortunately the results were abnormal. Since the results came back irregular and the lump was still present, the doctor sent the family to the lab for a biopsy. After the biopsy, results showed that the lump could be a lymphoma.*



**Questions:** answer the following questions in groups. Use provided resources or finish research for homework after reading the rest of this case study.

1. What were the symptoms that Stacey was having? Why do you think she went to the doctor? What made her symptoms serious enough for her to seek treatment? Would you have gone?
2. What do you know about lymphoma? Where have you heard about it? Do you know anyone who has battled lymphoma?
3. Homework/In class internet research:
  - a. What are other symptoms of lymphoma?
  - b. What types of lymphoma are there?
  - c. What is the cause of lymphoma?
  - d. What are the treatment options?

**Part 2: What next?**

*After some initial disbelief, it sunk in that lymphoma meant cancer. The entire family wanted more answers and so did the doctors. Stacey needed to go to an oncology unit for more testing and to confirm the diagnosis. The specialist ran a complete blood count and did more testing on the biopsy results to make sure it wasn't a lab error. After waiting two hours, they got the news that there was no mistake. It was Lymphoma.*

*Dr. Steed, the oncologist, explained that Stacey would need to have a surgery scheduled for the next day for a bone marrow aspiration (removing bone marrow from her hip) to check for cancer cells. She will need to have a spinal tap to check the spinal fluid for cancer. These tests will give a full diagnosis of the type of cancer it could be and will give them more information about what the treatment plan should be.*

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*The tests confirmed that Stacey had **Hodgkin Lymphoma**, which meant there were abnormal cells called Reed-Sternberg cells developing in her lymph nodes. The bad*



