Dr. Moran’s questions to evaluate testimonials (Gorski modification)

※ Was the cancer definitely present?
※ Did it go away (or clearly respond to therapy) as judged by reliable tests?
※ Was the advocated treatment the only one used?
※ Was the therapy a replacement for primary therapy or a replacement for adjuvant therapy?

Thanks to Dr. Peter Moran:
http://www.users.on.net/~pmoran/cancer/how_to_read_a_testimonial.htm
Primary versus adjuvant therapy

- **Primary therapy**
  - Capable of curing or eliminating the cancer by itself
  - For most solid tumors: Surgical excision

- **Adjuvant therapy**
  - Decreases the risk of recurrence after primary therapy
  - Radiation therapy: Reduces risk of local recurrence
  - Chemotherapy: Reduces the risk of systemic recurrence

- **Neoadjuvant therapy**
  - Designed to shrink a tumor to make organ-sparing surgery possible
Suzanne Somers: History

- Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2000
  - Lymph node negative by sentinel lymph node biopsy
  - Estrogen receptor positive
  - Stage I (probably; size not known)
- Underwent lumpectomy and radiation therapy
- Refused chemotherapy
- Refused Tamoxifen (taking “bioidentical” hormones)
- Now says she would not opt for radiation
- Opted instead for Iscador (Mistletoe extract)

Sources:
http://www.thecancerblog.com/2006/12/13/suzanne-somers-breast-cancer-survivor-going-her-own-way/
http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0104/24/lkl.00.html
Answers to questions in the Somers case

- Was the cancer definitely present?  
  - YES

- Did it go away (or clearly respond to therapy) as judged by reliable tests?  
  - YES
  - Surgery removed it

- Was the advocated treatment the only one used?  
  - NO!
  - Lumpectomy and radiation
What is the benefit of chemotherapy and Tamoxifen in a case like Somers (0-2 cm)?
What is the benefit of chemotherapy and Tamoxifen in a case like Somers (2-5 cm)?
Take home lessons

* Surgery cures most breast cancers that can be cured
* Radiation, chemotherapy, and hormonal therapy are icing on the cake
* The benefits of chemotherapy and hormonal therapy increase with more advanced resectable tumors
* Oncotype
A brief testimonial interlude

Natural Cure Testimonial Woman (NCTW): “I cured myself of breast cancer using herbs and diet. No toxic poisons pushed by big pharma for huge profits for me!”

Mean and Nasty Skeptic (MNS): “Congratulations! That’s really amazing! I’m so happy for you! I’m curious, though. May I ask you a question about how you did it?

NCTW: Sure.

MNS: How was your breast cancer diagnosed?

NCTW: What do you mean?

MNS: Well, what kind of biopsy did you have?

NCTW (now suspicious and hesitant): I had a surgical biopsy. Why do you ask?

A typical mean and nasty skeptic as seen by NCTW
Why did the mean and nasty skeptic ask about her biopsy?
Lumpectomy versus excisional biopsy

- **Lumpectomy**: Excision of a breast cancer with curative intent. More properly called a partial mastectomy.

- **Excisional biopsy**: Excision of a breast mass for diagnostic intent.
  - Image-guided (mammography, ultrasound, MRI)
  - Straight up old-fashioned surgical

- **Differences**:
  - Intent
  - Aggressiveness
  - Excisional biopsy can equal lumpectomy
What this means...

...is that a woman who has undergone an excisional biopsy has had some “standard” therapy and may well have had a definitive excision of her breast cancer!