

Melissa Smith's Story

By Stephanie Smith



My sister is 28 years old, she hasn't had the best luck over the past 5 years, she has battled Hodgkin's lymphoma not only once but twice. 16 months ago she was announced to be in remission for the 2nd time. Still with minor complications here and there over the past 16 months she got to enjoy her life somewhat for close to a year before she was struck with a new symptoms and a new disease which she is currently battling... A disease called "Transverse Myelitis"

Transverse Myelitis is a rare and extremely painful neurological disorder caused from the radiation which was given to her 16 months ago, and supposed to treat her. Unfortunately it helped rid the cancer but caused this new disease

This disease causes her body to attack its own spinal cord and has spread lesions through her entire spine and causing unbearable pain, inflammation, and swelling. This disease started by numbing, tingling and loss of sensation in one toe, and then fastly & progressively moved up her entire body leaving her with no feeling, or use from her chest down.

My sister can no longer stand, walk, and at this point even wiggle her toes... she has to completely depend on other people to do pretty much anything for her.

Things I think we all take for granted at times.... she is also always in excruciating pain from the lesions all over her spine. For someone who has always been so full of life, loves to work out, walk her dogs, shop, bartend, and just smile and be happy this has been DEVISTATING. I honestly couldn't tell you the last time I saw my sister genuinely smile. She tries to stay as positive as possible, but with constant let down after let down, that has become a battle of its own.

The lesions cause a pain in which the doctors can only describe to us as placing your hand over a fire and leaving in there, only 100 times worse because it is actual nerve damage, which causes an unbearable pain. The swelling and inflammation of her spine is life threatening because of where it actually sits on her spine, the lesions and swelling are right on the barrier of her brain, if that barrier is crossed in the slightest bit her brain will no longer be able to signal oxygen through her body and that would cause death.

Currently she is being treated with chemo-therapy to help with the swelling. They are also treating her with Hyper Baric chamber which helps get oxygen through her entire body because her body is too weak to do it all on its own anymore.

They have tried several other treatments as well that her body didn't respond to. She has had many spinal taps, blood transfusions and treatments over the past 6 months, and she truly can't seem to catch a break.

She was just released from the Intensive Care Unit at John Hopkins Hospital because her blood pressure was dangerously low, and heart rate extremely high which is life threatening as well. She now has blood clots all through her legs, causing yet another problem. They have her on blood thinners that aren't quite doing the job, so another possible surgery is in the near future for her as well. If these blood clots break loose and go to her lungs or heart, it would be fatal.

Just the thought of my sister not being by my side is unreal, and something I refuse to accept.. She is not only my best friend, but one of the most beautiful, full of life, strongest, kind hearted people you will ever come across.

My sister put herself through 4 years of college and graduated at Towson University with a 4.0 GPA all while battling lymphoma and never once even thought of giving up, or even complained at that. She has recently been accepted into the Nursing program at AAMC but unfortunately due to this disease that has to be put aside. She has always been passionate about donating and volunteering for charities. She has dedicated her life to friends, family, and helping others and now to have this help from all of you and for her to be chosen as the beneficiary for this tournament is amazing and a blessing from god.

The physical, mental and emotional toll this has taken on her has been unreal and to add the financial stress and burden to someone who has always been able to financially provide for herself and others as well has made things extremely difficult.

