

May 9, 2018

Russ & Jo's Digest



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This letter is dedicated to those of you who get most of your news from us via paper letters and have been unable to follow our journey for the last seven months at:

<https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/russlicht>

Russ's Health Journey

On October 5, 2017, my hematologist called to say I had acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and that I would be checking into the hospital in the next 12 hours. I packed four pairs of socks and underwear which amused the nurse who checked me in. I was clueless about the journey before me.

Four weeks later I was walking with hunched shoulders and shaking hands as I tried to steady myself for my first trip home. My reprieve from the hospital lasted ten days and then I was back in for more chemotherapy. Expecting the worse, I was amazed when they kicked me out again after just six days.

The false optimism collapsed after Thanksgiving when complications from chemo led to a bacterial infection in my blood. I don't remember much from that week, but I did get to know a habitually happy infectious disease doctor who continually encouraged me. He was also quite tickled when he discovered the bacterium causing my problems was barely known by the rest of my doctors. It's never a

good thing when your case becomes the main topic of discussion at the nurse's meeting. The infection cleared almost as fast as it came on and I was back at home waiting for the next phase of the battle.

We were experiencing definite answers to significant prayers faster than we could count. A bone marrow transplant is the only cure for the sub-type of AML that I have, and by early Dec. they had identified a bone marrow donor who agreed to help save my life. This total stranger was a perfect match out of millions of entries in the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

At the same time, I could count dozens of answers to little prayers every day. My health was quite frail, and I prayed for every little detail that would help get me through each day. Going back to the Caring Bridge web site, Jo Anne has cataloged more than 30 pages of prayer requests, and every single one had a specific answer. Knowing that God was superintending my

medical care with attention to minute details gave me the strength to face what was about to happen.

A bone marrow transplant is a transfusion process whereby the donor's stem cells are given to the patient through an IV line. It takes only an hour to complete. That's the simple part. The hard part no one can prepare you for. Six days before the transfusion I was given powerful chemotherapy that completely killed my bone marrow (and lots of other cells too numerous to mention). Five months later my body is still trying to heal from the damage done by that chemo.

The good news is that my new bone marrow is cancer free at the 100-day mark. My next major milestones are at six months and one year.

We've had six months of Family Medical Leave and are starting to return to work on a part-time basis. My energy levels are returning slowly, but I'm able to do meaningful work from home with occasional trips to the office. Thank you for standing by us.

Pray:

- That the leukemia will stay gone.
- That the large blood clots in my arm and neck will dissipate.
- That my T-cells will become 100% new donor related and none from my old immune system.

- For rebuilding lost muscle mass.

Praise:

- For Jo Anne's amazing new nursing skills.
- For no signs of leukemia in my new bone marrow.

- For hundreds of people who have been encouraged by seeing God answer their prayers.

*In Him,
Russ & Jo Anne*