

Julia Watson

Omaha Honored Hero

Julia was diagnosed with a t-cell lymphoma tumor, the size of 1-2 women's fists, on her right trachea at the age of 11 months in December of 2007. On the Wednesday prior to her diagnosis, she had been to a well baby check with her pediatrician and the pediatrician thought she was showing some signs of RSV, a cold. On the Saturday following, she awoke in the middle of the night, would not go back to sleep, wanted to be upright and showed some signs of labored breathing. Her mom, decided to take her to the emergency room.

After evaluation by the emergency room physician, an x-ray was ordered showing a large amount of fluid around her right lung. The physician drained the fluid and transferred Julia to Children's Hospital in Omaha, NE. After two very long nights, lab tests, x-rays and CT scans, Julia was diagnosed with T-Cell Lymphoma. Thankfully for Julia, her oncologist had a Curesearch treatment protocol in hand and started chemotherapy, resulting in immediate improvement in her condition. The first month of chemotherapy stopped the fluid-secreting tumor and shrunk the tumor to a mass of tissue about the size of a quarter. After the 3rd month of treatment there was no sign of tumor remaining.



Julia's treatment protocol consisted of 10 months of intensive chemotherapy and steroids. There were 5 different regimens, each lasting from 5-9 weeks. Some arms of her treatment included a week of in-patient IV chemotherapy, some included 4 straight days of chemotherapy in the clinic, some included once a week chemotherapy in the clinic. The chemotherapies were given through IV, by injection into the fluid surrounding her spine, or orally in pill form.

The next phase of her treatment, lasting 14 months was maintenance, in which Julia received chemotherapy in the clinic 1 day month, took oral

chemo at home daily and steroids 5 days a month. That was a breeze compared to the first 10 months!

Julia had the typical side-effects of treatment, most occurring during the first 10 months....extremely depressed immune function, diarrhea, lack of appetite, extreme appetite, mood swings, fluid retention, the need for blood and platelet transfusions, hair loss, rashes, tiredness. She had one line infection requiring 2 weeks of IV antibiotics, and a blood clot in her right leg, requiring 3 months of twice a day medication injections. Over the course of her 2 year treatment, Julia was given 7 different types of chemotherapy and 2 types of steroids. She has taken some type of chemotherapy almost everyday. During maintenance, Julia would give herself her own chemo at the age of 2!

Julia's family was greatly blessed and supported by family and friends; Julia's church, King of Kings in Omaha and other area churches including Church on The Move and Thanksgiving! Lutheran; her dad's workplace, KM3TV; the Hematology-Oncology physicians and staff at Children's Hospital and the nurses and staff of 4th floor; her sister Natalie's school community, Concordia Academy; individuals who heard about Julia or anonymously showed support, along with the previously mentioned, through meals for the her family, lunches brought to the hospital, letters and cards, gifts, blankets and most of all prayers. Julia's cousin completed a Team in Training triathlon in her honor in North Platte, NE in

the spring of 2008. A classmate of her sister's shaved her head to raise money for St. Baldrick's Foundation in Julia's honor in the spring of 2008 as well.

Julia will have a clinic appointment once a month, continue with an antibiotic for 3 days a week for 3 months, and have her port removed in 6 months. She will have a chest x-ray every three months for the first year.

Overall, Julia has done great. She has grown and developed appropriately for her age and has been overall healthy. Julia loves life. She is a very busy, now 3 year old, who laughs easily, loves to play at the park, wants to go on any stage, can often be seen kicking a soccer ball, playing basketball or singing nursery rhymes. She loves Thomas the Train, baby dolls, the color yellow, and has never met a dog she didn't try to befriend. She freely gives hugs and kisses to anyone who asks. Recently, she corrected her mom, while having a cold, saying "I'm NOT sick". After beating cancer, one's perspective of "sick" changes. We look forward to working with the Leukemia-Lymphoma Society Team In Training and to the life Julia has ahead!



As I think about the last two years, from a mom's perspective, it went by quick. Just like completing the chemotherapy treatment plan, physical and mental training is one- hour at a time, one-day at a time, one-week at a time, one-month at a time, with an end in site. I would check off each day and phase of treatment, just like you will check off each phase of training. I celebrated each end and goal reached. I remember it being hard, but not a lot of the details of it being hard. I remember having set-backs and disappointments and tears, but once again, I can't remember the details unless I really try. The fun and good times of each phase are what I think of first, and what I can remember the most about....the amazing people, the relationships, the funny things, what we did, what people said and events that that brought happiness. I hope that you to, will find fun and good times in your training and event! When Julia was done, the Oncology clinic had a big banner for her hanging up that said "Way to Go Julia" and that's what people will tell you when you are done....Way to Go! Thank you for raising money for people like Julia, across the lifespan, who battle Leukemia and Lymphoma. The research and education supported is invaluable. Julia is alive today, because of the research done prior to her diagnosis. Until a cure is found for each type of Leukemia and Lymphoma the need for funding exists. We are grateful to people like you. Thank you.