

Thank-you for being a hero!

I thought it was high time we sent you an update and to let you know where your support has taken us.

Well, we made it to Seattle and Graham started his treatment this week.

The standard of care here is fantastic and we know we have absolutely made the right decision for Graham's treatment to come to the [Seattle Cancer Care Alliance](#) (SCCA), a partnership between the [Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center](#), [UW Medicine](#), and [Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center](#). We are so impressed by the medical team's meticulous approach to treatment to ensure the best outcome for Graham.

We arrived on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April after flying into Los Angeles and connecting to Seattle. Thanks to [Ian Dicker](#) ([Hawthorn](#) President 1997-2005) for generously paying for our flights and for organising an upgrade to Business Class with QANTAS and the use of the Business Class Lounge in Melbourne before we left. It was a great experience and it made the trip so much easier. But I think it may have ruined us for any future Economy Flights!

Since arriving, we have been spending most of our time at the SCCA building by [Lake Union](#) as Graham needed a battery of tests to make sure he is fit enough for the transplant.

Unfortunately, the bone marrow biopsy taken on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April showed that the Leukaemia is on the way back with a reading of 1.7% (up from 0% in March). This was very disappointing news but technically he was still in remission which is classified as <5%.

So, we made a decision to have another biopsy a week later on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> May to see how fast the disease was progressing as it came back very quickly when he relapsed in January of this year. If it was stable then he could proceed to transplant but if it was moving fast then we would have to re-assess our plans.

This reading came back at 4.2% and while still technically in remission, the number of Leukaemia Cells had more than doubled over the week, so we had to re-think.

It is well shown that going into transplant with leukemia present increases the risk of relapse post transplant. The problem is that while the new immune system is taking shape from the infused umbilical cord blood stem cells, you don't want any leukaemia cells in the marrow waiting to start growing again as the budding immune system may not be strong enough to hold back the leukaemia.

Optimally, there should be about a 6-9 month period of time free of any Leukaemia for the new immune system to establish itself and recognize that the leukaemia is foreign and destroy it. Something that Graham's current immune system is unable to do!

So the plan now is for Graham to have another dose of chemo to bring the blasts back to 0% and then proceed to the conditioning (more chemotherapy and total body irradiation) and then have the transplant.

It is disappointing that he wasn't able to proceed directly to transplant but we have got to get this right. As Alastair (Clarkson) said to me yesterday "It's going to be a bumpy ride and this is just the first bump. You just have to stay positive and move forward." I feel like he is coaching us along this journey and we are so grateful for his continuing support.

We are missing the kids dreadfully but we know they are in good hands with my Mum, their babysitter Katie and all the families at St Leonard's. Plus, being able to see and speak to them everyday via a SKYPE is wonderful.

Once again, thank-you for your generous donation and kind words of support. We are so humbled by the love you have shown us over the last several weeks.

The total amount raised so far is \$190,792.47 which is just phenomenal. We have borrowed the rest to start the treatment and there are a number of fundraising events being planned, so keep an eye out for these on the [latest news](#) page of our [website](#).

Graham has started writing a [blog](#) so you will be able to read about his experience first-hand and I will be sending further updates along our journey.

Much love and thanks,

Sam