Portraits of Hope

William Brock

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mothers & fathers
sisters & brothers
wives & husbands
daughters & sons
friends
survivors
Seven years ago, I could not have imagined I would be writing this today. I had just been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, I was about to start my first round of chemotherapy and I was certain I was going to die. It was September 21, 2004, almost seven years to the day after my father’s own diagnosis, also of leukemia, on September 29, 1997. My father died on November 6, 1997, just six weeks after his diagnosis, and it seemed my fate would be the same.

The fact that I am here to publish this book is nothing short of a miracle. It is a testament to science and determination, to the skill and care of doctors and nurses, and to my being lucky enough to have a brother who was a match for a bone marrow transplant. After many months of chemotherapy, supportive care and innumerable tests, I entered Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital in Montreal, Quebec in early February 2005 for yet more difficult chemotherapy and my transplant. On February 17, 2005, it was Day Zero, the day of my transplant, the first day of the rest of my life. My only hope.

It was a long road back. No matter how strong I thought I had been, recovery was painstakingly hard. But little victories gave me back my life. First I was able to leave the hospital, then walk around the block, then to cycle, then to run very slowly. I went back to work, at first part-time. In the beginning, every day was a struggle. There was progress but setbacks as well. However, hope, effort, faith and sweat prevailed and I am now, over seven years later, stronger than ever, mentally, physically and spiritually.

My illness taught me many things about life and its fragility, and the great gift and joy of our everyday experiences. Above all, it has taught me the importance of making every day count for the better and to live, in the words of Jonathan Swift, all the days of our lives, both for ourselves and those around us. We owe that not only to all of those who made recovery possible, but also to all those who did not survive. My bout with leukemia has been an amazing journey. I have been privileged to meet doctors, nurses and researchers who have dedicated themselves to their patients and the fight for life. I have come to know many patients, some of whom, like me, are thankful to be alive, while others, unfortunately after courageous battles, have not fared as well. They are all now an important part of me.

While science has made great strides, there is much work left to do. I embarked on this book to build support for Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital, and in particular for a fund which I helped to establish, The Fund for Research and Education into Blood Cancers. This Fund raises money for fellowships in the treat-ment of blood cancers and for the Centre of Excellence for Cellular Therapy at the hospital, which we hope will lead to new treatments and cures.

I hope this book inspires you, through the stories of those who have faced the terror of blood cancers and triumphed over it – survivors, doctors, nurses and others. I also hope that you and others will donate generously to our Fund and help us develop alternative therapies that ultimately allow many more to say “I have beaten leukemia, I am alive, I am strong and I am forever grateful.”

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June 2012
Christiane and her grandson, born after she survived leukemia

« Tout est possible dans la vie, même de déjouer le destin. »

― Judith

« Mon Coeur, la Hurleuse me rend le siroco. »

― Judith
Cameron, a survivor of leukemia, and his father Paul H., a survivor of leukemia, and his wife.
Barbara, who survived lymphoma, and now cycles to help find a cure for cancer.
Danielle (left), whose life was saved by a bone marrow transplant from her sister Allison, a warrior and a survivor.

“I look at the world differently now, with a much more meaningful perspective. I am far stronger and wiser than I ever could have imagined. I am a warrior, I am a survivor.”

—Allison
Jaymie, who defeated leukemia at 23.

“My health is something for which I have a wholly newfound appreciation and respect.”

— Sabrina
« Quand la vie nous offre une deuxième chance, il nous faut à notre tour redonner à la vie. »

— Paul
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“Our understanding of disease is becoming more and more complex, often involving multiple causes, and available institutional research funding is unfortunately insufficient to respond to society’s growing needs. Fundraising for research initiatives, such as the William Brock Fund, is essential and invaluable to the advancement of research and finding a cure. This anthology of inspiring testimonials and beautiful images offers a message of hope not only for survivors and their loved ones, but also for all health care professionals and researchers. For this, William has our thanks and admiration.”

– Hélène Boisjoly, M.D. M.P.H.
Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Montreal

Contrary to what we sometimes believe, blood cancers don’t always have the last word. This book is the living proof. It features portraits of those who have prevailed in their fight against these diseases, and those who have accompanied them: the donors, as well as the doctors, nurses and researchers of Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital of Montréal, Québec, a world leader in the treatment of blood cancers.

For more information about this book, or to order a copy, please contact William Brock:
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