

30 Days/30 Stories®

Jasmin

Diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in March 2019 at the age of 14

My name is Jasmin and I am 15 years old. I had just started in a new school, new friends and the first year of high school, So much to look forward to. Unfortunately, all this came to a halt mid-school year while I was still 14. I was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), cancer of the blood. This news sent my whole world over the edge.

My symptoms started with headaches and a rash. I later learned it is called petechiae. I was being bullied at school for not being able to read correctly. I am an active reader and love to read. But I was having difficulties reading and kept complaining of headaches. I thought that the symptoms were just due to being overwhelmed in school. I told my parents how I was feeling, and they scheduled a doctor's appointment to see what was going on. My doctor had initially thought that it was Lyme disease. After doing a couple of blood tests, I was told I had ALL.

I know I will get through this, but it is so hard to think positively at a time where I am still scared of not knowing what is next.

Written by Jasmin

Jasmin is a sweet, loving, kind, innocent 15 year-old girl. She loves to act in school plays, do ballet, and learn about chemistry and science. She also enjoys reading and spending time with her extended family. Jasmin is not your typical teenage girl. One of her dreams is to become a performer on a Broadway stage. She also loves baking and enjoys incorporating chemistry into baking. The summer of 2019 was going to be a major one as she had big plans to travel over the summer. She was supposed to go to Spain on a school trip and cruise to several Caribbean islands with her grandparents and her two crazy cousins, as she lovingly calls them.

Early February 2019, Jasmin began complaining of headaches, extreme fatigue, and poor vision. We initially thought she must need a new glasses prescription. The last time her vision changed, it had caused daily headaches. We also believed that since it was cold and flu season, she was probably coming down with a cold or a sinus infection. We then scheduled an ophthalmology appointment, but her doctor was not available until mid-March.

In mid-February, her headaches continued, and they were getting stronger. Now her symptoms were a little different because she was experiencing nausea, lightheadedness, and sensitivity to light. About a week later, Jasmin also complained of having a rash on her breast. We immediately attempted to schedule an appointment with her pediatrician. But her pediatrician was not available for an emergency appointment, and instead, we saw the nurse practitioner. She said Jasmin did not have any signs of a cold or sinus and prescribed a cream for the rash on her breast. As she was walking out of the room, she turned around and said, "Let's do some blood work and check for Lyme disease." This was on February 27. Two days later, we received a call from the nurse practitioner, and she informed us that Jasmin's bloodwork had come back and that the results showed that Jasmin had Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). As the nurse practitioner was talking, all I could think was that this is a mistake, not my child. We were told to take her to the nearest emergency room right away. We had just dropped her off at school after a 3-hour school delay, and now we have to go back and pick her up. What do we tell her? We don't even know if the results are right.

Continued on next page
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The nurse recommended we take her to the nearest emergency room to run more blood work and, if confirmed, she had to be admitted that same day. We chose to go to Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's Hospital, which is approximately an hour away from our home. We headed to the school and picked up our daughter, having just dropped her off an hour previously. She was surprised to see us back for her so soon and thought we had decided to "play hookie" from work and were going to take her someplace fun. It broke our hearts. We couldn't tell her the real reason, nor could we look her in the eyes. The drive to the hospital felt like the longest drive we had ever taken. Now we had to wait for the results. Once in the hospital, she knew something was very wrong. Our fears were confirmed. We had the Hematology-Oncology doctor break the news to her, and she was shocked, confused, and angry at us for not telling her.

Our daughter was admitted to the hospital on the evening of Friday, March 1. We spent the weekend listening to her doctors explain how they were going to combat the ALL. They told us the side effects of the chemo, the steroids, and some of the other medicines. Her team of doctors are amazing and took the time to explain everything and answer any questions we had. She has endured surgery for her port, several spinal taps, blood and platelet transfusions, a month-long of throwing up five or more times in a day, headaches, mood swings, depression, abnormalities to her brain, pancreatitis, weight gain and weight loss due to the steroids, and stretch marks.

As a parent, you never want to see your child suffer or hear her say, "Mom, please help me," or, "why me, mommy, what did I do to deserve this much pain and anguish?" She is my everything, and I am so proud of her because, after all that she has endured, she still manages to give me a beautiful smile.

We are so thankful to our families, friends, and all who have provided their support and prayers. These have helped us to get us to the point where we are now. We are looking forward to "REMISSION." We would especially like to show our gratitude to the nurse practitioner who performed the blood test and found our child's ALL early, to the Lehigh Valley Hospital medical staff for being helpful, caring and supportive, and last but not least, to the Pediatric Cancer Foundation of the Lehigh Valley (PCFLV family) that has gone above and beyond to assist families in a time of crisis and do so much for our kids to keep them uplifted and to look forward to having some sense of normality at a time they feel loss and scare.

Writing by Jasmin's parents, Miriam and Nathan

If you would like to donate in Jasmin's honor Click Here

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