

My Story

Brianna Todarello

Cancer. A disease in which abnormal cells divide uncontrollably and destroy body tissue. Some examples of cancer are; Breast cancer, Prostate cancer, Colon cancer, and Leukemia. And of all the cancers in the world. Leukemia is the one who intruded my body and broke me down into a million different pieces. I am Brianna Todarello and this is my story.

November 8th 2015, my mom rushed me to Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital after I continuously kept vomiting and complaining of severe pain in the left side of my stomach. I thought it was just a pulled muscle and stress, because I was on the school dance team at the time and I was working really hard that week. So after talking with the doctors they decided to do multiple test including: urine tests, blood tests, and CAT scans. After skittishly waiting for the results, the doctor walked into my room with a confused look and said, “Sorry, we can’t treat you here, we are transferring you to UK Children’s Hospital in Lexington. Your spleen is about to rupture and we think it would be best if you went there instead.” So we did.

They packed me into an ambulance as fast as they could, and off to UK I went. While I was in the ambulance my mom had called my dad and grandparents and they brought my sister and cousin. It was the longest ride of my life. I never had to ride in an ambulance before, so everything was very new and scary to me. On the way to the hospital a million thoughts of what

could possibly be wrong with me were flying through my head. At that point I was a nervous wreck and so was my mom. When I entered UK Children's Hospital all of the same tests were done again. This time when the doctor came to my room he asked for my parents and my grandpa to step out into the hallway with him for a minute. I had no idea what was going on but I can tell you that I wasn't prepared for what was about to be said.

When they all came back into the room they were all crying. My mom was a mess, but my dad and grandpa were trying to keep it together. The doctor tried to allow my mom to give me the news but she was crying so hard she couldn't speak. After yelling over and over again for someone to tell me what is going on, my doctor finally said, "You have Leukemia." I didn't believe what I was hearing. So I laughed and said, "No I don't, you're wrong." He replied "No I'm not wrong. You have Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia." I was shocked beyond belief. I had about fifty different emotions just trying to come out all at once. I didn't know what to do. I asked if it was treatable. He told me "It is, but there will be a long hard road for you for the next two and a half years." I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. For the rest of the night a team of doctors explained to me what was going to happen the next couple days. But I was still in shock I can't remember what was said. All I heard was "CHEMO, SURGERIES, IN HOSPITAL STAYS..." and at the end of all their jabbering that was just going through one ear and out the other. I went to sleep and prepared myself as much as I could for the pain I was about to endure.

The next morning was the next 3 years of my life. Chemo, infusions, surgeries, in hospital stays, fevers, losing my hair, losing my friends, missing out on 3 years of school, not going to my dance competitions, not riding my horses, not being home ever, not seeing my sister live her life and support her, and not being a normal teenager was the hardest part for me. But throughout those years I met great nurses and doctors that became my family and friends. And kids who were going through similar things I was. It became my new normal. And on February 28th, 2018 I had my last chemo treatment at 16 years old. It was the first time in 3 years that I felt the weight on my shoulders disappear. As I write this it has been 6 months and 23 days of being cancer free and chemo free! And I hope that one day no child and their family will ever have to go through what I've been through. I love my life and wouldn't change a thing about the experience though. It has made me open my eyes and become a better person. Life is fragile we should not take it for granted. We should treat others with the same respect we would want to be treated with. I am Brianna Todarello and that is my story.