

A Love Letter to Children's

The following is a letter that Sharon Knudsen wrote to the staff at Children's Hospital & Medical Center after her daughter, Hannah, completed treatment for recurring Ewing's sarcoma.



I watch my 11-year-old daughter jumping on the trampoline with a friend and reflect on the last four years. I am grateful to be able to watch this scene, see her jump and play, her hair blowing in the breeze along with her joyous laughter. It didn't seem that this was going to be possible a year ago, when Hannah relapsed with Ewing's sarcoma, an aggressive type of bone cancer. I am grateful every day to the staff at Children's Hospital for making this all possible for Hannah.

Hannah's first round of treatment for Ewing's was in 2005-06, and her second round was January 08-November 08. During that time, she was cared for by her primary oncologist, and 4 other oncologists who were either on inpatient duty or on-call. She visited the cardiology unit for regular screenings of her heart. She went to the emergency room, where she saw the emergency room docs. She had surgery several times, with a primary surgeon and a specialist for each major surgery. She saw a pulmonologist when she had a respiratory issue, and worked with respiratory therapists following each major surgery. She had regular x-rays, CTs and an MRI in radiology, and made frequent visits to the lab for blood draws. She was cared for by the inpatient nurses on 6th floor, intermediate care nurses on the 5th floor, care partners, CARES nurses for outpatient procedures, and oncology nurses in the clinic. Her Children's pediatrician visited many times when Hannah was inpatient, and Hannah met countless residents during her inpatient stays. She knew the pharmacists and receptionists. She was entertained by child life specialists and the social worker countless times. I think you get the picture. The girl's been around, and has been seen by many departments at Children's.

Through out all of these visits (approximately 75 days inpatient and hundreds of outpatient visits), Hannah was treated with care and concern by Children's staff each and every time. That is not to say that everything went perfectly, because there were certainly challenging days. But perhaps that is what is most remarkable about Children's and the people who work there. On each of those challenging days, someone always stepped up to help, to answer our questions, to provide reassurance and to care for Hannah.

Certainly no experience has been more challenging than Hannah's relapse. When her oncologist told us that a new tumor was found in January, 2008, my husband Jim and I could not have been more devastated. Fewer than 20 percent of Ewing patients survive five years after relapse. After having grown close to so many people in the Hematology/Oncology Clinic through Hannah's first treatment, it could not have been an easy thing to tell us. Yet, each question was answered, surgery and treatment were scheduled immediately, and a new plan was formulated. When we asked for consultation at another hospital, our oncologist could not have been more accommodating.

More than a year later, Hannah is thriving. She is truly a miracle. We live every day with the knowledge that her cancer may return, and we will deal with it if and when that day comes. In the meantime, we know that the staff at Children's will be there to care for her. In August 2006, following the conclusion of Hannah's initial treatment, I wrote a love letter to Children's. I still feel that way. We love the staff at Children's, and every day we are thankful to them that we have our daughter with us.

Sincerely,
Sharon Knudsen