

Hey sisters and brothers of mine,

I wanted to give you guys an update about something so no one feels out of the loop. I know how good our parents are at sharing information. Not.

You probably know that since I entered remission almost 24 months ago, I have had several blood transfusions – seven, actually – to aid in treating something called Aplastic Anemia or AA, Aplastic Basically my bone marrow doesn't make enough red and white blood cells, and platelets. My immune system is confused and attacks those critical performing cells

See, because the doses of chemotherapy & radiation needed to cure my cancer were so high, my bone marrow stem cells were permanently screwed – causing the AA. We have been using stop-gap measures like transfusions, immunotherapy, steroids, animal sacrifice, etc. But I've taken it about as far as it can go: my numbers are down, and transfusions become much more risky, and much less effective the more you have. So I'm at the point where, barring an actual miracle, I need new bones (think skele-grow [harry potter]). Or just the marrow part...or you know, I will in fact, be deadies.

A bone marrow transplant is used to:  
Replace diseased, non-functioning bone marrow with healthy functioning bone marrow (for conditions such as leukemia, aplastic anemia, and sickle cell anemia).  
Replace the bone marrow and restore its normal function after high doses of chemotherapy and/or radiation are given to treat a malignancy. This process is often called rescue (for diseases such as lymphoma and neuroblastoma).

The process is this: Healthy bone marrow is taken from the bone, and then (this is the cool part) they treat/modify the stem cells from the bone marrow, basically turning them into genocidal maniacs that will destroy the damaged marrow already present in my bones, then it grafts into my bones, and basically re-seeds my body's immune system.

Before I get the cool new cells, I'll have to have heavy chemotherapy and radiation – barf. To basically nuke out all possible cells and tissue to make way for the new stuff. My immune system will be utterly annihilated, I will have absolutely no recourse for fighting any kind of illness. During and soon after the transplant, I'll be sick, tired, and the mayo clinic lists “temporary mental confusion and emotional or psychological distress” as a common side effect. . . WTF!?! As if I, or any, Nelson or Barton needs any help with that!

So I was going to see if anyone who was willing to, would be tested so I could ask you the biggest favor of all time: “hey can you give me a transplant so I can see what it's like to be 30?” BUT, it turns out – I qualify for a cool method called an autologous transplant, which means I will be both the donor and recipient. I've still got SOME good marrow left, mostly in my chest – so they will stick a giant needle straight into MY STERNUM, suck out the marrow stem cells, treat them, and put 'em in the freezer till the Hiroshima-ing of my body is done, then they will put it back, and voila!

An AUTO transplant will leave the door open for me to receive an ALLOGENUS (from someone else, probably one of you) transplant, should leukemia ever hit me again.... my current condition, Aplastic Anemia, is not cancer, it's not malignant, it is a result of my cancer treatment. The treatment of it, however, is fairly similar to AML - with the chemo-ing and the radiating, and the transplanting.

Anyway I'm real sorry for the novel, just kind of wanted you guys to know what's up. I'm still in some pretty good denial about it, so we're not exactly sure when this will all go down, but the harvest of the marrow cells will probably take place soon after school is out (beginning of May). If you have any questions feel free to, you know, learn to use Google. JK : )