



The 2Simple Trust

Former A&E nurse and charity worker Allison Hyde joins a number of families fundraising to obtain lifesaving antibody treatments for their sick children



Stella, with her mother Allison, before her diagnosis

You'd imagine that being a nurse in casualty prepares you for just about anything, but Allison Hyde, who worked as a nurse for East Kent Hospitals Trust, A&E Services, from 1990 to 2004, will tell you differently.

As lead nurse, Allison was used to taking charge. She was used to caring for those who are desperately ill. She didn't, however, expect to be caring for her own baby daughter Stella Rogers in rather desperate circumstances.

Having a family happened fairly late in life for Allison – as she had been abroad working for the charity Raleigh International after 14 years at the hospital – and giving birth to her daughters Zoe and Stella were extra special events for her because it seemed, at one point, she might not ever get to be a mother.

So it was a particularly painful experience to learn, that at just 17 months, her daughter Stella was diagnosed with a rare type of cancer known as Neuroblastoma MYC-N amplified (high risk), originating from her adrenal gland. At the time of diagnosis the cancer had grown to a huge size in her belly, which to treat has required 70 days of aggressive chemotherapy; major surgery to remove the primary tumour; a stem cell rescue that wipes out her bone marrow, three weeks of radio therapy and six months of oral chemotherapy.

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The treatment is harsh, but it needs to be. Neuroblastoma, a very aggressive cancer that affects children, is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in the under fives. The disease, which can be difficult to spot initially, is triggered by abnormally developing nerve cells in babies and young children. Allison will tell you that being a nurse, being medically trained and understanding what is happening to her daughter doesn't make it easier to deal with.

In spite of having the most up-to-date care available in the UK, Stella has bleak future ahead with her chances of long-term survival very low and a relapse quite likely.

However, an expensive antibody therapy available in the USA, costing a massive £250,000 upwards, could increase her chances of survival significantly. With this treatment, antibodies are injected into the blood stream and travel around the body attaching to any Neuroblastoma cells that they find. The body's immune system can then identify the cancer cells and attack and kill them.

Allison knows that receiving this therapy is her daughter's best chance of beating her illness, but she needs the public to get behind her and support her baby's treatment. Sadly, there are a number of other families in the same position.

Note to editors:

A European trial is to be available to children in the UK – which has been highlighted in the press – but this treatment is not the same as the USA immunotherapy. The USA antibody treatment has been on offer for some time with data indicating excellent results in terms of improved survival. The antibody therapy about to be trialed here in the UK is new research which started on 1st Dec 2009 and for which no research data has been collected. The proven USA treatment is a combination therapy of other drugs, which is not being offered to UK children. What is being offered is the new research treatment.

Recent press reports may be interpreted incorrectly that there is no need for fundraising now, but this is very damaging to the efforts of those families still fundraising as for many of the children their very best chance *is* to go to the States for therapy.

The 2Simple Trust (Reg Charity No 1113954), raises money to benefit children suffering from Neuroblastoma, to fund research into Neuroblastoma, and to achieve other charitable purposes which seek to assist those children suffering from Neuroblastoma. The Trust welcomes general donations and donations to designated appeals; these can be found at www.2simpletrust.org.

Also see www.stella-appeal.org and www.forstella.org for information on how to help and fundraising events. As the websites explain, you can donate by post / cheque or directly to the appeal bank site, or go to the Just Giving website at www.justgiving.com.

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