



ASHLY CRISTOBAL

AGE 15

On February 15th, 2024 Ashly was admitted to Cincinnati Children's oncology unit following weeks of feeling ill. After obtaining blood work, it was confirmed that Ashly had B cell Lymphoblastic Lymphoma (ALL). B Cell ALL is the most common type of pediatric cancer. Ashly receive chemotherapy for the better part of two years, and she would need to spend many weeks in the hospital.

The first several weeks of treatment were largely uneventful. Ashly was responding well to treatment, she was able to keep up with her school work at home, and her family pulled together to support her as they all adjusted to this new normal.

On April 14th, 2024 Ashly was admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) with altered mental status. This sometimes occurs with patients, going through chemo treatments and is normally a reversible side effect. Unfortunately, Ashly did not get better, and for several weeks, she remained in the Children's Hospital PICU, unable to speak, often screaming out. The neurology colleagues concluded Ashly was likely having visual hallucinations that were scaring her, and she was unable to tell those around her what she was experiencing.

As these episodes continued, the doctors grew increasingly concerned that Ashly would die because of these complications with chemotherapy. Her parents were informed of this possible outcome and initially were devastated by the news; but quickly stood firmly in their faith. . . Ashly's mother voiced that while she understood why the medical team felt her daughter was going to die, she truly believed God would save her. Ashly's parents sat vigil at her bedside in the PICU for weeks. Often, their spiritual community would join them. Their faith never wavered. Their appreciation for the staff caring for Ashly never wavered.

Days after the family learned that Ashly would ultimately die, she slowly and steadily began to become calmer and more alert. There is no medical explanation for this. Cincinnati Children's has the best oncology program in the country. Every single doctor in the Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute researched every possible thing that could be done to help Ashly. They came up empty. Every single oncologist investigated case studies. They learned every person on record, experiencing similar symptoms, with a similar profile, died. **Ashly did not.**

Ashly's road to recovery was not easy. While we were beyond grateful that her brilliant brain and vibrant personality returned, she also had to relearn to walk, talk, swallow, go to the bathroom, dress, write, and adjust communication to yes/no and non-verbal communication cues.

Ashly went from the PICU to the Children's Hospital inpatient rehab where she remained until mid-July. When she returned home, she relied on her parents for essentially all her activities of daily living. Her parents, knowing Ashly's care needs were extreme, had to move to a new residence, because their previous home involved climbing upstairs, something Ashly could not do. Ashly's father started working overtime to help secure a new apartment that was on the ground floor so Ashly could shower; a basic human need. They helped Ashly get to occupational and physical therapy multiple times a week. She came to our oncology clinic for checkups, for more chemo, for admissions when Ashly became sick.

Today at 15yrs, Ashly continues to get stronger and closer to her full capacity, mentally and physically. Her journey is a miracle and a testament to how faith can change outcomes!