

From: Chris Mims [mailto:chrismims1031@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, December 04, 2011 12:55 PM
To: Trish Mims
Subject: Chris Update

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. This Holiday season is very special to me. First, this month we celebrate two years since my stem cell transplant. Yes, it has been two years since the transplant and I have had several rounds of doctor visits since my last journal update. I had a visit with my cardiologist, Dr. Stephanie Coulter, in late October. Her quote was "I don't need to see you again for a year. You are just taking up room in my waiting room." Can you feel the love? I am very blessed to have great doctors with some personality. I visited with my renal specialist, Dr. Thomas Stephen Brennan, this past week. He told me that all of my numbers are stable and if anything, they trending towards continued improvement. Dr. Brennan said and I quote, "You are very boring and no longer worthy of my many talents. I don't need to see you again for four months." Yeah!!! And now to our most favorite, Dr. Kelty Ruth Baker, my hematologist, all of her tests continue to show fantastic results. She of course still sees me once a month because of the Revlimid medication that she has me taking. I once asked her how long I would have to take this medication. She responded, "How long do you want to live?" So it looks like I will have a regular date with Dr. Baker every four weeks for a very long time. So you can see, I seem to be doing remarkably well.

This holiday season is also special because it has been three years since I had a "normal" holiday season. Three years ago, I was sick and we did not know what was wrong with me. Two years ago, I was in the hospital for Christmas and New Years getting my stem cell transplant. Last year, I decided to try the turkey and dressing at Methodist hospital while having my gall bladder removed. So, Thanksgiving in the hospital and six weeks of recovery since they had to open me up. You can imagine my excitement about having a drama free Thanksgiving and Christmas at home with my beautiful wife and friends this year.

I have a small sign in my office that says, "Enjoy the little things for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things." So many times we focus on the big things and the miraculous things but so many times those big and miraculous things happened because of a whole bunch of equally miraculous small things. I am grateful to God for all the small things that have happened in my life to prepare me for this time in my life and to get me through the past three years. The most wonderful small thing was a decision to go to the University of Houston. That small thing resulted in meeting my beautiful wife Trish, surrounding me with a wonderful group of lifelong friends, and the enjoyment of 300+ special "kids" every year.

I am also thankful that God has taught me to be quiet and to listen for His voice. It was His small voice that told me that I had the wrong doctors three years ago. It was His small voice that told me to call Dr. Powers, Trish's former physician, for a referral to a good renal specialist that led us to Dr. Jennifer Finch, who ultimately sent us to Dr. Baker. Today, these are truly big things but only looking backwards can we see how small things were really big things. So remember, enjoy and pay attention to the little things.

One last thought. I was in the kolache shop a few weeks ago. A mother and her teenage son were in front of me waiting for their order. We got to talking while we were waiting

for our orders. The mother was also enjoying the Christmas music being played. Well one thing led to another and if you have teenagers you know that the teenage boy was a little embarrassed by his mother's silliness. As I left, I was prompted to say to the teenager, "Enjoy your mother while you have her." This holiday season, take time to enjoy things and times while you have them, you never know if or when we have such opportunities again.

Until next year, Merry Christmas and thanks for always being there for me in 2011.

Chris

October 8, 2011

- **You Make A Difference!!!**

"Your time is limited. Don't waste it living someone else's life." I don't need to tell you that quote is from Steve Jobs. You have heard it a thousand times this week. An American success story, a man who changed the way we all lived passed this week into history. What has been incredibly amazing is the numerous stories in the news about how Steve Jobs and particularly his speech at Stanford has inspired so many people. I wonder how many people told Steve what he meant to them before he died. Why do we wait until it is too late to tell the world how much someone means to us? Why don't we take the time to tell people that we love them and are inspired by them while they are still with us? I want to challenge you today to pick up the phone and call someone very close to you and tell them you love them and what they mean to you. Then tell them "that's all I wanted to say. Have a great day." Then hang up. Imagine how you would feel if you were on the receiving end of that phone call. Imagine the great day your friend is going to have today.

On the health front, everything is going well. There have been no changes in my health or treatment. Honestly, the only side effect is the continual fatigue and dealing with the heat. I know that I am a miracle and I am so thankful for God's healing hand and His leading me to the best doctors in Houston.

I also am thankful for all of you that have been there for Trish and I during this adventure we call, Amyloidosis. Some of you may ask why do I continue to write when everything is going so well. The answer: I was going to stop and only write when something changed, but so many people said they wanted to continue hearing from me. I get emails from other people that we have never met saying they are going through the same thing and need to talk to someone. Every month this blog gets a little over 200 hits. I have no idea who most of you are. All I know is someone needs me to keep writing. To all of you, thank you for letting me make a difference in your life.

Until next time - Chris

September 4, 2011

- Sept Update - Lessons Learned

Happy Labor Day Y'all

As of this writing, I am continuing to do well. There have been no major or minor changes in my condition and I am extremely grateful for that. To God be the Glory, great things He has done. So, I since I told you all the medical facts last month, this month I would like to share with you a life lesson that I have learned.

You have heard it said, "Sometimes it is better to be lucky than good." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." "Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened, ask and you shall receive." "Marry your best friend." "The ears do not work if your mouth is moving." "It is hard to teach an old dog new tricks." "To have friends, be a friend." That is probably enough. You can probably add dozens if not hundreds to this list. I am not about to sit here and tell you that the blessings that Trish and I have experienced has been because I am soooooo good. Too many of you know how miserably I have failed in life. But, I do believe the lessons that I have tried to apply to my life were returned to me one hundred fold when Trish and I needed it.

I have not always tried to apply these truths to my life, but as I got older, I saw that people who only thought of themselves were very lonely and only became lonelier the older they became. People who treat others poorly, got treated poorly. And so on and so on. I didn't want be to one of those people who despite how they appeared on the outside were actually miserable on the inside.

I worked my way through college waiting tables. My goal at each table was to make those people happier when they left than when they sat down at my table. I was a voice major. I never desired to be a star. I sang and directed choirs in church. I just wanted someone to have their souls lifted a little higher that day. I joined an exercise class. The first day, I was encourage by other members to hang in there and you will get it. I went back. I got it. Then when I saw new members struggling, I encouraged and help them and they stayed and they got it. I am in the insurance industry, not to wheel and deal but to help people with their lives and futures. I started the Band Alumni at the University of Houston. Not for myself, but for the hundreds of "kids" that struggle to get an education. I go to UH games not to pull for a nation championship or bowl game but to support those "kids" that could only afford college if they got a scholarship and will not play another game after college. Again, I am not telling you this to tell you how good I am because I am not that "good," but, I have been "good" enough or "lucky" enough that when Trish and I were in need, we did not have to ask, we had to be humble enough to receive. The help, support, love and God's grace was already in place to get us through the last three years.

Yesterday, was a magnificent day. It was the opening day of the college football season and my alma mater, the Houston Cougars were hosting the UCLA Bruins. We owed them a whooping from last year. We have been in the middle of a tremendous draught here in Houston and have had over 40 days of 100+ heat. This is not the type of weather Dr. Baker wants me in because the heat makes my blood pressure drop and then I drop. Not pretty. Yesterday, I was surrounded by love. So many friends, watching me. Making sure I didn't over do it. Making sure I was cool. Making sure they weren't about to lose me. Promising me they would "kick my butt" to the car at the first sign of trouble. They were also so glad I was there. I was lucky because God, brought clouds and twenty mile per hour winds from the north and a high temperature was only 90 degrees. I had a marvelous day and the Cougars beat UCLA.

Long story short, when you need help and you need friends, it's too late to change your habits and expect friends to just miraculously show up. Now, is the time to live unselfishly and to be a friend whether you ever get sick or not. I promise your life will be a whole that more fun.

In closing, I want to quote Hall of Fame Football coach Bill Yeoman. One day recently, I was speaking to him in the hall at the university and told him what an inspiration he had been to me. He thanked me with a big smile and said, "You know life is so much more fun when you wake up in the morning knowing that you are going help somebody today."

Wake up tomorrow with the goal of helping somebody

Until next time – Chris

August 6, 2011

- **I am turning Twenty**

Yes, this month it will be twenty months since my stem cell transplant for my Amyloidosis. I thought it would be a good time to let those who follow this journal that have Amyloidosis know how I am doing medically and physically. First, for all my friends, I am doing amazingly well. At my last visit with Dr. Kelty Balkar, we spoke more about Trish's back problems than my Amyloidosis. She even offered a break in my treatment to allow me to have plenty of strength to take care of Trish. Thankfully, I am doing well enough to not need the break. By the way, you gave Trish a prescription for three massages a day. I have been very busy. :)

So, now for the technical info for those with Amyloidosis. Physically, I am feeling very well most of the time. Obviously, I am not the way I was before Amyloidosis but I can do almost anything I want to do. I do have some difficulty with low blood pressure still but mainly when I am in the heat too long. If things get too far out of hand, I wear compression stockings and they do help keep things in balance. I wish they came in more colors but sadly they have just black, tan and white.

I have permanent Kidney damage. I still spill a significant amount of protein through my urine. To handle this I am on a low protein diet that I admittedly do not strictly follow. I am slowly moving to a more vegetarian style diet so I can enjoy meat and cheese when I want to partake. I also take a very low dosage of lisinopril to help take the load off my kidneys. My kidney doctor, Dr. Stephen Brennan, has told me it is unlikely that we will see significant improvement in my kidneys. The treatments we are doing are to preserve what I have left.

My heart was also effected. I had thickening of the heart wall. My cardiologist has me on a pravastatin. I do not exactly know what that is doing for me but she and Dr. Baker are in agreement for me to be taking this medicine.

For Amyloidosis itself, Dr. Baker has me taking a 5mg dose of Revlamid for 21 days and taking 7 days off. This is a maintenance dose to help support the fantastic results from my Stem Cell Transplant. (At least that is what she says. I think it is just an excuse to see me at least one a month :)) To be honest, the biggest side effect from the revlamid is fatigue. By the end of the 21 days, I really need a nap in the middle of the day but that is not easy to come by working. There are also a few other side effects that vary from month to month and are not debilitating. I have given up alcohol because of the stress of the alcohol on my liver.

I am in the middle of being re-vaccinated. I was disappointed when I got my polio vaccine and it was a shot and not a sugar cube. I did have a rough reaction to the tetanus shot. Other than that, everything has been going smooth. I have my next round at the end of October. The vaccines are spread over 18 months.

Well, that is what life is like 20 months after the transplant. As I said before, I do pretty much whatever I want to do as long as I don't get out too much in the sun and heat. I work like normal including driving 55 miles one way to the office 3 days a week. I am looking forward to the opening of the college football season in a few weeks. I am very thankful that God has chosen to make me a miracle. I am thankful for the most wonderful medical team you could ask for. I am thankful for all of you that continue to pray for me and encourage me. I am thankful that 31 years ago, God put the most amazing woman in the world in my life. Thank you Trish for an amazing 31 years and for taking such good care of me.

Thanks for reading and for praying. See you soon,

- Chris

July 10, 2011

Thanks for the Memories

It has been a little over two years since I started this blog and journey with Amyloidosis. I thought I would quit writing sense I was doing better but three things have kept me writing. First, the fact that as of today I have 9,397 hits on my blog. That I find mind boggling. I have found that my blog is linked to several Amyloidosis websites and other patients websites. I don't want to let those people down in letting them know that there is hope in this battle. Second, the continued responses I get that encourage me so much. I really appreciate your comments and prayers of support. Please keep them coming. Finally, my friendly banker, Downey Vickery, threatened to do bad things to me if I didn't at least write once a month and at least let everyone know I was okay. So, everyone, "I'm doing okay!"

Seriously, I am encourage that my journey may be helping other people in their life. One thing I realized in my journey was how much time I spent on things that were not of any value. I made a commitment to spend more of my time on things that have lasting value or have stood the test of time. What does that look like? I spend less time in front of the TV and more time with my wife, my dogs, my friends, my garden, my kitchen, family pictures, and reading good books. It is not that TV or other things are bad, it is just WHAT they have kept me from doing for so many years. I need time to relax and instead of letting my mind escape through entertainment media, I spend it on the back porch with my dogs or my wife or reading my Bible or something else with great value. Also trying to stay in better contact with family and friends, That resulted in my cousins coming down last month and we spent a day together catching up and going to a ball game together. It was one of the highlights of my year so far. Can't wait to get together again. Reading great works has also been a part of my life. Trish and I got "Nooks" for Christmas. I try to spend two to three hours a day reading. Sometimes that is the last couple of hours before I go to sleep which really calms my mind and helps me get a good nights sleep. It also helps me not focus so much on me but having the ability to look beyond myself.

The fun for the last couple of weeks has been reading "Robinson Crusoe" by Daniel Defoe. I don't know if I read this as a child but I am pretty sure that I didn't realize

how great of a theological work it is. I can guarantee you that they don't teach this in school anymore. For those of us that are dealing with great illness or affliction it is a great encouragement of how God is always there in our life. Especially, those times when we feel all alone. One of the quotes that really stood out to me and that I leave you with today. "And this part I cannot but recommend to the reflection of those who are apt in their misery to say, " Is any affliction like mine?" Let them consider how much worse the cases of some people are, and their case might have been if Providence had thought fit."

Wow! Praise God for the wisdom He imparts from so many directions. If you have not read Robins Crusoe in while. Maybe give it a new look with mature eyes.

Thanks again for all of you love and support. I spent the morning looking over comments from the past two years. Both mine and yours and realized had bad things had been and could have been. I also saw God's hand all the way in my journey and your words of support. Keep it up!! It means so much to me and many other people who are looking to us for hope and encouragement.

Okay, Downey, you asked for it. I hope you have a great week.

Love to you all,
Chris

[Sign My Guestbook](#) [Read Tributes](#)

• **THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2011 3:27 PM, CDT**

Adjusting

As summer approaches, life gets even more interesting. It has been awhile since anything "fun" has happened and that is a good thing. The month of May was a long on for us. Trish had a major sinus infection that she eventually decided I needed to try. I just love sharing with my wife. We are just about over the illness of the month. It seems that it doesn't take much for me to get sick and it takes forever for me to shake it. As one of my friends said, "Be thankful you are here to get sick". That is very true.

As summer approaches I am reminded again of the things Amyloidosis has done to my body. I have a very low tolerance for heat or especially direct sunlight. I know that is why God gave us air conditioning Right? Seriously, the amyloid effects my blood vessels ability to contract and expand normally. So, when I am in the direct heat, my body tries to cool itself off but in the process the blood vessels expand and then do not contract properly. Result : low blood pressure and fainting. It has been nice over the past few months to not have to deal with the low blood pressure. Now, I have to watch myself outside. It is all part of adjusting.

Sooooo, today I am grateful that I am adjusting once again to my "new normal" and of course the ever present issue of my body forgetting that I am actually only 21 years old. (LOL) I don't think I will be able to win either one of these battles. Just wanted to tell everyone hello and thanks so much for continuing your thoughts and prayers.

Until next time,
Chris

• **SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2011 9:35 AM, CDT**

Because He Lives

"God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus;
He came to love, heal, and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior live.
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow;
Because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives. "

These words have never been more real to me. Two thousand years ago, Jesus changed the world. Thirty years ago He saved my life. Two years ago He proved Himself in so many ways that I will never be able to praise Him enough.

This resurrection Sunday, I am living proof of His love, His forgiveness and His healing power. I pray this day that you will feel His love and know His forgiveness and never need His healing power.

He is Risen!!! He is Risen Indeed!!!

From: Chris Mims [<mailto:chrismims1031@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2011 11:32 AM

Subject: Chris Update

Happy Saint Patrick's Day to one and all. Wow, what a difference a year makes!!! Compared to last year, our life looks sort of normal now. Of course, our normal is a different normal than it was last year and very different from what it was before Amyloidosis. Attitudes and priorities are different as well. I hope during our journey that you have been able learn a little more about yourselves as well. I hope that the things I have experienced have had a positive effect on your lives. I know they have on my life. I am very grateful for the past two years. Yes, it has been two years next month since my diagnosis of Amyloidosis. Time really flies when you are having fun doesn't it?

I have met some incredible people on this journey and made some closer friendships. I want to thank all of you that have taken the time to read my updates, to pray for me, to send a card, or anything else you have done to support us and encourage us. I hope that if any of you find yourselves in a similar situation that you will be open with your friends from the very start and allow them to touch your life as so many of you have touch ours. I recently read a book, "90 Minutes in Heaven" by Don Piper. Don is a pastor in the Houston area and his book is a New York Times best seller. I encourage everyone to pick up a copy and read it. If I were to write a book about what I have learned the past two years, it would read a lot like this book. The book will help you understand what someone who is critically ill or injured is going through and if they just open their heart to God and to those who love them, what can happen. It has happened in my life.

Enough of the preaching and on to real news. We received some excellent news yesterday from Dr. Baker, my hematologist. This is technical stuff and I will use Trish's words of explanation:

“Here's what you need to know from the recent study in the American Journal of Hematology,

“In contrast, a 90% decrease was seen only in 38% of patients and predicted a superior outcome with a 90% survival at 5 years,”

What Dr Baker told you: You are well above a 90% response – which the paper indicates only happens in 38% of the patients treated. This predicts a superior outcome with 90% of people with your similar response still being alive at 5 years. This paper was published in 2010 in the American Journal of Hematology.

The only way you could be better is to not have gotten this disease in the first place.”

I hope that excites you as much as it does me. That means you are all probably stuck with me for at least another 5 years. I know that just gives everyone another reason to drink an extra glass of green beer today!!!

Happy Saint Patrick's Day

Chris Mims,

Go Coogs, Go Band

chrismims1031@gmail.com

Visit my Caringbridge website at <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Thursday, December 16, 2010 12:08 PM

Subject: Chris Update #60

A Year in Celebration.

Saturday, December 18th, is the official one year anniversary of my stem cell transplant. I went to the transplant team yesterday and did my one year testing. We should get those results in January. We also started my vaccination process by getting my tetanus, polio and pneumonia vaccines. They gave us our schedule for getting my vaccines. It is going to take about 18 months to get all of my vaccinations done.

2010 has truly been a tremendous year. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for all that has happened this year. I am also grateful to all of you for following along with me. If nothing else was gained from Amyloidosis than getting closer to wonderful people, then it has been worth it. As you know, there have been a lot of other great things that have happened as well.

I don't know if there is any reason to continue this blog any further. It has become more of a philosophical discussion than an update of what is going on. I don't want to bore people

unnecessarily because everything is going so well for us. If something dramatic occurs, I will come back and let everyone know what is happening and ask for your prayers and support. Of course your prayers and support are always welcome.

BTW, we are celebrating my one year of remission with a new birth in our home. We have three new puppies that were born on Tuesday. So, this holiday season will be centered around taking care of the new life that God has brought into our lives.

I hope everyone has a magical Christmas and a fabulous 2011. I am always available via email at chrismims1031@gmail.com if you would like to say hello or want to know what is going or just to share a story or joke.

Thanks again for all your support and prayers.

Chris Mims



From: Chris Mims [mailto:chrismims1031@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, November 29, 2010 10:46 AM

To: Trish Mims

Subject: Chris Update

- November 19, 2010 at 1:11 PM - "So many people ask me how I cope with having such a terrible disease. How do I deal with it? I live life. You see, my life is really no different than it was two years ago except for one thing. God has blessed me by showing me my own mortality. Before Amyloidosis, I was not guaranteed the next day of life. Anything could have happened to take my life. Two years later, nothing has changed. I am still not guarantee tomorrow or even the ability to finish this update. But, I have faced my mortality and I now understand more than ever that life is short and there are so many important things in life."
- Little did I know the test of that belief I was within hours or going through. Around midnight Friday night, I started having severe abdominal pain and was very sick. Things did not get better during the day on Saturday and I could not eat. Sunday morning, Trish took me to the emergency room at Methodist. After test, it was determined that I had an acute gall bladder problem and it needed to come out sooner than later. They were finally able to remove the gall bladder on Tuesday evening. Turns out that things were much more dangerous than first imagined. Here is where God's hand shows itself in the midst of everything. When they try to go in laproscopic, the artery literally fell off the gall bladder which was completely gangrenous. This resulted in the loss of two pints of blood quite rapidly and they had to open me up. If I had not had this done prior to going away for Thanksgiving, there is a good chance I would not be writing this update today. Second, for some unknown reason, they did not give me blood in surgery to replace the loss. Don't know why except that God again was in control of the situation. The next morning around 4 o'clock the resident came in and told me that they were going to give me two units of blood. First I said "okay" then a voice starting yelling in my head "NO NO NO" I starting yelling to the resident, "stop, stop, stop" He asked what the problem was, I said 'I do not consent to any blood products until you talk to my hematologist" He said it is 4 AM and we need to start this now. I said not until you talk to Dr. Baker. He said, I don't have her number. I said I do, call her. But I don't want to

wake her he said. I said trust me if this is a stupid call I will take the full blame but you are not doing anything until you talk to Dr. Baker. Remember this is in the early hours of the morning after surgery the previous evening. I don't remember much of this day except this exchange. He did call Dr. Baker and I don't know exactly what was going on but if he had continued without consulting her, it could have been bad for me. The blood they give me must go through some other procedures that are not standard and he was unaware that it needed.

- I am home recovering again. Even though I would like to say that I have been a perfect example of what I have been preaching through this latest adventure, I cannot say that. In fact, I really feel like I have been "kicked in the gut" and that "enough is enough already." "This just is not fair." It seems I will have a little time to think about this and grow once again. Because of the procedures, they are going to watching my blood counts very closely. This is not exactly what they want their transplant/Amyloidosis patients to be doing in their spare time. They were happy with me not being "interesting" and truthfully so was I.
- Please continue to pray for us. It has been a rough Thanksgiving time and the next two weeks may not be a whole lot better. It looks like several trips to doctors for tests and follow up just make sure I am well. Mentally, I am trying to get back to where I was when I wrote the last update. I am sure it will come. It just may a take a little time.

Thanks for all your love and support,

Chris



From: Chris Mims [mailto:chrismims1031@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, November 19, 2010 1:29 PM
To: Trish Mims
Subject: Chris Update

Happy Thanksgiving 2010

As we approach Thanksgiving 2010, it is time to reflect and give thanks. First, I am thankful that I am approaching the one year anniversary of my transplant. Second, I ,m thankful that according to all indications ,I am in remission. Third, I am thankful for all the friends that have and are supporting me through this journey. Finally and probably the strangest is I am thankful for Amyloidosis. What!?!?!? Yes, as strange as it seems, I am thankful for Amyloidosis and the effect it has had on my life. So many people ask me how I cope with having such a terrible disease. How do I deal with it? I live life. You see, my life is really no different than it was two years ago except for one thing. God has blessed me by showing me my own mortality. Before Amyloidosis, I was not guaranteed the next day of life. Anything could have happened to take my life. Two years later, nothing has changed. I am still not guarantee tomorrow or even the ability to finish this update. But, I have faced my mortality and I now understand more than ever that life is short and there are so many important things in life. So, the one thing that has changed is the things that I used to think were important are no so important anymore and the things that are truly important get my attention now. I don't know any other way to say it but to say, I wouldn't change having Amyloidosis and the events of the past two years because they have helped me have a much fuller and meaningful life. I hope this Thanksgiving season you can reflect on what is truly important. I hope you can make changes in your life that will make your life more meaningful and full without having to be reminded of your mortality by getting an awful disease like Amyloidosis. I ask you to continue to pray for the health of my body and I will pray that my experience helps you to bring new life and meaning to your life. I praise God for this opportunity, the opportunity to share life with you.

Happy Thanksgiving and God's Peace and Love to you all.
Chris
Thanksgiving 2010



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2010 7:45 AM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.com'
Subject: Chris Update #58

Yesterday was ten months since my transplant. It is amazing how time passes. Everything is going very well. We will really know my status in December when they do all of my testing again including the infamous bone marrow biopsy to see how much if any Amyloid is being produced in my body. Until then we continue to get used to our new "normal" life. Whatever that may be.

Sometimes you think about what seems to be the silliest things. This past week, I thought about how wonderful it is to take a shower. I know all of you have had this experience. You have come in from the beach or a long day working in the yard and just the feel of the layers of dirt, sweat and/or sand being removed from your body is so refreshing and such a pleasure. I know that feeling too. That was not the "wonderful" shower feeling I was having. I was enjoying the simple things in life. How wonderful and grateful I am that I can take a shower by myself. Ten months ago, I dreaded a shower. It meant that two nurses had to come in and help me step by step into the bathroom. They had to hold me up in a chair while I brushed my teeth. They then helped me to the shower. I sat down and leaned on the wall while they bathed me and rinsed me off. They dried me off while I sat in a chair and then the ordeal of getting my hospital gown on and getting back in the bed to sleep because I was so tired from taking a shower. Even when I came home. Trish had to help me in the shower. I could not do things by myself. I could not go to the bathroom by myself. Everything involved some doing things for me.

Fast forward ten months. I am so grateful that I can take a shower and enjoy it just because I can take a shower.

Thanks for all your prayers. I hope you have a wonderful week and take a moment to be thankful for the things you can do.

Chris

Chris Mims,

Go Coogs, Go Band

chrismims1031@gmail.com

Visit my Caringbridge website at <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 12:45 PM
To: 'chrismims1031@gmail.com'
Subject: Chris Update #57

- Tuesday, September 14, 2010 12:04 PM, CDT

I will call this episode - The Common Cold.

When you have a special disease and have had a bone marrow transplant, everything that happens to you is looked at through a new set of glasses. You do not remember if this is how you reacted to something in the past or if it is different. You try to say it is nothing all the while knowing that nothing can be something. When do you trouble the doctor? When do you call the specialist or just go to the GP? Is this a kidney doctor, hematologist, gastro, who do you call??? That is what I have been going through for last week.

For the first time time since January, I have been sick. I don't know where I got it or exactly what it is. I thought it was just a cold. Unfortunately, it seems that in my current state, there is no such thing as "JUST A COLD." For those who have good memories, I got scolded by Dr. Baker last November for not calling about a fever blister. So, you can imagine what kind of trouble I will be in next Monday when I go for my monthly visit. I guess we need to back up a little. I started feeling bad Sunday week ago. By Monday I was pretty lacking in energy and had a stuffy head. On Tuesday, I went to work in the Woodlands in the middle of the tropical rains even though I had developed a pretty good cough and felt miserable. This is where everyone is supposed to say, "it is hard to keep a good man down." Right!! Most of you would have done exactly the same thing. Okay, maybe it was dumb to drive 100 miles round trip in the tropical storm but this is Houston. We are used to it. Right? Anyway, by Wednesday, I was "out of gas." That is when the questions start. Of course, Trish wanted me to call the doctor immediately and being the good husband and patient that I am, I didn't! Thursday was worse. Did I call? NO! "It is just a cold!" Just to satisfy her, I did send the doctor an email. Friday, the same. Received email response from Dr. Baker to call if I don't get better. Saturday and Sunday, I am completely grounded. Did I call? NO! Didn't want to bother anyone on the weekend and plus, it is just a cold. Right? What can they do for a cold? Monday, Day 9, finally called the doctor. She sent out antibiotics and cough medicine. Tuesday, Day 10, feeling better but not over the "hump" yet. Now you can see why I will be in soooooo much trouble next Monday. Please pray that I don't get what I deserve.

Thanks for all your prayers and support

Chris

Addendum from Trish:

No, there is no need for support at the house while he is recovering from his surgery to have my foot removed from his backside. I kept myself under control, despite the fact that he gave his dang cold to ME! GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR I

just decided to let Dr Baker have at him. Tehe! That wasn't very nice was it????
LOL!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Wednesday, September 01, 2010 9:24 AM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.com'

Subject: Chris Update #56

It seems like it has been forever since I updated my journal for everyone but it really has only been a month. It has been a very active month and very busy. Of course, that did not fit with the prescription that Dr. Baker gave me to slow down. However, we are moving in that direction.

First, I have merged my insurance agency with my friend and colleague Keith Wagner. This process began on August 1st. We are still in transition but as of today, I officially work with Keith instead of for myself. My new position will take me out of the day to day operations and sales. I will now be doing training and development for our merged business. Since Farmers does not allow two lead agents in an agency, I gave up my position as an agent and now Keith is the lead agent. It has been an tough and difficult process but in the end it will be an exciting new opportunity for us both.

We met with the renal specialist, Dr. Brennan, earlier this month. He is very happy with the progress I am making even though I have not implemented the low sodium/ low protein diet he prescribed for me. He doesn't want to see me again until November. WOW

We have met with the dietician about the new diet to provide relief for my kidneys. It is a lot more restrictive than we thought it would be. When we first were told about the diet, we did a little research and said, "Hey, no big deal." Well, we were on the right track but not nearly close to what is necessary. We started the new diet this week. I am allowed a total of 7 oz of meat/dairy/eggs per day. PER DAY. The dietician has divided that into 2 oz of proteins per meal and 2 oz of fatty starch per meal. I am allow 2 snacks a day for the other ounce of protein. I can eat most of the green/ colored veggies and fruits that I want. Unfortunately, I have always been a meat and potatoes kind of guy. There are not many of the veggies and fruits "I want". I filed a complaint with Dr. Baker about the renal specialist she sent me to at our appointment today. She asked why and told her about the diet. In Dr. Baker's usual empathetic way, she says, "so, I'm a vegetarian myself. What is wrong with that diet?" I NEVER get any sympathy. She is tough!!! Honestly, it hasn't been too hard so far. I still have a lot of adventure ahead of me as I try new foods and learn how to prepare them. By the way, I only get a teaspoon of salt a day. That is probably harder than the protein.

We did have our monthly "date" with Dr. Baker today. She is very pleased with my numbers and has increased my oral chemo. She says that this will be the dosage that we will keep for the present. So, for the time being, I still get to go get my blood drawn once a week and will see her again on September 20th.

Another exciting thing happened this week. We scheduled our first vacation since I was diagnosed with Amyloidosis for next spring. We will be cruising the Mexican Rivera. After consulting with the transplant team, we were assured that I could take the cruise as long as I drink bottled water on board and in Mexico. We are really looking forward to it. It has been a very long time without a break.

With all the changes that we have been going through this last month, one thing remains the same. God is still good to us.

Thanks for keeping up with me. I will check back in with everyone after my next "date" with

Dr. Baker.

Till next time,
Chris

New email for Chris - chrismims1031@gmail.com



From: Patricia Mims [<mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net>]

Sent: Wednesday, July 28, 2010 8:30 AM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.com'

Subject: Chris Update #55

Hello from soggy Richmond, TX.

As we have shared with you in the past, no news is good news but we will keep everyone up to date on how things are going.

We have had an eventful couple of weeks. On Friday night July 2nd, I went to bed around midnight. The next thing I remember is being revived by Trish sometime in the early hours from passing out and being in a lot of pain on the floor. I had gotten out of bed for something and passed out. I hit my back very hard and my head as well. We spent Saturday in the ER at Methodist because I was in such severe pain from the fall, we feared that I had done some type of major damage to my back. I had first taken a Norco at home and it did not even phase the pain. In the ER, they gave me morphine, vicodin and something else and that did not relieve the pain. After all the cat scans and x rays proved there was no major damage, they gave me a shot of dilaudid Let's just say that is some good stuff. They wouldn't let me bring any home with me though. I wouldn't share either. It was good and I finally got relief from the pain. We saw the orthopedic on Tuesday the 6th. He suspect there was nothing more than bruising and maybe a little degenerative disc that was damage. He gave me a week of steroids similar to Prednisone. If you need to GAIN weight, I highly recommend this drug. It makes you hungry ALL the time. Between the fluid retention and the constant snacking I gained 15 lbs in a week. GOOD NEWS - I have already lost ten of them. YEAH! The steroids helped some but we called our kidney doctor because the pain was in the kidney area. They ran some more test and saw no additional damage to my kidneys. I haven't worked out since the first of July because of the back pain but hope to give it a try this Friday. That will give me the weekend to rest if it hurts me.

So, that brings us up to yesterday when we had our monthly "date" with Dr. Baker. You know there aren't too many guys that get to "go

out" monthly with two beautiful women. :) Granted they make me feel like a king but they definitely rule. Over all Dr. Baker is very happy with my numbers but not happy with me. This is where the "date" takes a wrong turn and Trish in her usual loyal and loving self sides with Dr. Baker. "WOMEN????!!!" They ALWAYS stick together. I have been given a prescription to "Slow the *&^% down". I told Dr. Baker there is no such prescription. She said, there sure is and she just gave it to Trish. The consequences of not following the prescription? Well, let's just say my insurance company will not cover it OKAY and leave it at that! Soooo, no work in the yard, stay out of the heat, don't work so much, slow down!!!!!!! So, while I have been trying to live as normally as possible, she wants me to take it a bit easier. I will try but the fun time of the year is just around the corner. It is going to be tough. I am going to need a lot my friends helping Trish to keep me in line on this one. I know you guys will. You have done a great job of taking care of me in the past.

Finally, research on Amyloidosis is showing a trend towards the transplants lasting longer with the low doses of Revlamid, oral chemo. So, while they have been threatening to put me back on it and then backing off, it is happening now. This is probably permanent except for the occasional holiday that these WOMEN in my life allow me to have. It is really no big deal. I did not have any side effects from it before and the only thing that I will have to stop is drinking any alcohol. I was already only allowed the occasional drink because of my kidneys. So, really it is better for me anyway. And I know that.

I cannot truly complain about "THESE WOMEN" in my life. God has placed them there and they are truly remarkable. Trish and I celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary Monday. Without God's grace, healing hand and the incredible doctor He has given me, I would not be here today. As Dr. Baker reminds me, Trish has "saved my bacon several times and I better listen to her". Dr. Baker has too and most importantly God has too.

None of us know what tomorrow will bring. I have an incurable illness and don't know how long God will allow me to stay on this Earth. The reality is that I am in no different condition today than I was before I was diagnosed with Amyloidosis and neither are any of you. It is called getting older. The difference between most of you and me? I now try to savor every minute of every day. I don't try to outdo someone else. I want to do something I enjoy and makes a difference instead of just have the most toys. I am counting my days as if each one could be the last. I don't leave Trish without telling her I love her and giving her a

kiss because if something happens to me, I want to make sure the last words I ever say to her are that I love her.

Until next time, I continue to treasure your prayers and support and hope God blesses you this day.

Chris Mims

NOTE: New email for Chris effective immediately is chrismims1031@gmail.com



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2010 12:31 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #54

Hello friends and family,

Most of you have figured out that the longer it is between updates the better the news will be. My last update was April 21, 2010. Since that time things have been going well. Chris continues to improve daily and regain strength bit by bit. He has returned to aerobics class and is really enjoying that. The only thing we have discovered he has real issues with is the heat – which is a problem when you live in Houston. He has pretty significant issues with low blood pressure if he gets out in the heat for any length of time at all. So we are finding ways to manage that and keep him up and doing most of what he wants.

He has been put on a low protein low salt diet by his new kidney specialist to try and preserve as much of his kidney function as possible. He was pretty bummed about that at first but has discovered that he can eat most of what he wants it just requires some meal planning. For instance if he wants a small steak for dinner then he has to be good and eat rabbit food for the other meals that day. He's adjusting. ☺

We have attended a family reunion for my Mom's side of the family, visited family in Carthage, and I got to go to Dallas for my Embroiderer's Guild Seminar – which for me was a REAL treat! We attended the Eagles concert last night and got to hear Joe Walsh sing and play “Life's Been Good To Me So Far” and the Eagles sing a good number of the “oldies” we loved. I've been gardening and Chris has been house cleaning – so somewhat of a roles reversal – but “Life's been good”. Thank God!

Last week we had his Six Month Post Transplant restage – redo of most of his testing.

We only have God to give the glory too and we feel so blessed and grateful that we have had so many friends supporting us in prayer and with “boots on the ground” helping with stuff around the house. Here are the six month results:

There is NO abnormal protein in his blood – no detection of the proteins that were causing the problems.

His Light Chain Proteins are ALL within normal range – these are the nasty little buggers that caused all the problems

They are not going to put him back on any Chemo for the time being

The only marginally “iffy” news is that he is still losing 10 Grams of protein a day in his urine – normal is about 100mg – but that is also down from the last measurement 3 months ago which was 14 Grams. There is a very small amount of Light Chain Proteins in what he is losing in his urine. We will discuss with Dr. Baker at our next visit if that is likely because of the Amyloid slowly breaking down and clearing his body. But it’s not a real cause for concern at this point. The transplant team told us this particular measurement could fluctuate and would likely take up to a year or more to really stabilize.

We are so grateful to God for these results and to everyone who has supported us in this difficult time. We are largely “hiding out” this summer and taking some time to rest, and recoup from what has been a couple of really crazy years. We still covet your prayers as this transplant process is a “remission” only. Your prayers for Chris’ continued return of strength and ongoing remission will be greatly appreciated. We have learned a lot of lessons about who is really in control during the last two years. And we’ve learned a lot of lessons about trying to run things on your own – without the help and support of friends. God IS in control, and we suffer far less stress when we let him take care of what is his responsibility and depend on him to give us the strength to take care of what is our responsibility.

Love you guys. We hope all is going well with you and that you have only good things to report too!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 7:51 PM

To: Christopher Mims (cmims@farmersagent.com)

Subject: Chris Update #53

Hello again friends, time for another chapter in the ongoing saga of Chris updates.

We had our first visit with Dr Baker, Chris’s hematologist, since last November – prior to the transplant. She is now back in the lead position on Chris’s health care decisions. She is happy with the results of the transplant, although she did look at me rather quizzically and asked how he arrived at not wearing his compression stockings any longer. I told her I had quit my job as law enforcement. Given that he has had no problems with significant fluid accumulation in his feet or legs and no dizzy spells she acquiesced to him not wearing the stockings. Although I don’t think she was too happy about it.

She did tell us today that given that he had a very tiny spike in this blood proteins and a very small amount of bad plasma cells still in his bone marrow even after transplant that she wants to put him on a maintenance dose of Revlimid. We weren’t terribly surprised

by this as Dr Carrum and the transplant team had warned us that she would likely recommend this course of action. The good news is that it will be the Revlimid only and no steroids. The bad news is Revlimid is an oral chemotherapy and it means that he will be off any form of alcohol consumption permanently – wine, margarita’s etc. Bummer! The dosage will be very low and aimed at supporting the remission that he currently has to keep it going as long as possible. She did indicate that in all likelihood the Amyloid would become resistant to the Revlimid at some point and it will cease to be effective, and she can’t predict how long that might be. She does hope it’s “years” as do we. He had very few noticeable side effects from the Revlimid in much higher doses last summer so we don’t anticipate the small dose she is prescribing will be of any consequence.

She did tell us that they are working to get an Amyloid Center of Excellence set up at Methodist in Houston – GREAT news for us!

If Chris ever does have a relapse hopefully there will be even more resources available to us at that time. And she has recommended a new kidney specialist that she wants us to see who is going to be part of this Amyloid Specialization group that is developing. She is most concerned about preserving and improving Chris’s kidney function since the levels of protein he is still losing in his urine are quite high. That imbalance leads to high cholesterol and all kinds of other issues that could create other problems if not resolved. It’s likely that the next chapter of his healing will have to do with working out some BP meds that they wanted to try which have the odd side effect of reducing protein loss through the kidneys. So we will likely be embarking on an effort to find a balance between the meds he currently takes to keep his BP up and the meds they will give him to help with the protein that are designed to reduce BP. This may be fun! LOL! But we are very happy about the budding Center of Excellence and are very happy to be one of their first patients and contribute what we can for them to learn how to deal with this disease as effectively as possible.

We have a meeting with Chris’s Cardiologist on Monday and given what Dr Baker said it will probably be just a cursory check. We are hoping that they release Chris to begin going back to the Y and his beloved aerobics class. Dr. Baker doesn’t think there is any reason he can’t so long as he is careful not to overdo it for the first few weeks. So all you Y Babes on this distribution list – take note – he’s likely going to be heading back to class very soon and it’s your job to make sure he doesn’t kill himself for a few weeks at least! Also, given that it is possible he may have a relapse at some point it is crucial that he do everything in his power to keep himself as fit as possible so if he has to consider a second transplant at some point in the future he will be well able to withstand it. Heidi – do your worst! LOL!

That’s all the news that is news right now kids. We’ll send our next update most likely after his May 24th appointment with Dr Baker – unless there is something of consequence that we find out between now and then.

Take care and God bless you all.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 10:32 PM

To: 'Patricia Mims'

Subject: Update #52

It has been 117 days since my transplant. Today was the much anticipated last meeting with the transplant team until December. Instead of being the highlight of the week, it was kind of anti-climatic since the first two days of the week were spent with Trish in the hospital with acute abdominal pain. Trish is doing 90% better and there is no answer to what is causing the pain. All we know is that stress is probably the main source. Imagine that. Well, the news today was exactly what we expected. My disease is in remission.

Trish has all the detailed numbers but the most important thing is the sum of the total. That is good news. What does remission actually mean though??? First, there is currently no cure for Amyloidosis. So, even though I am in remission, until God provides man with the cure or reaches down and removes the disease from my body, I still have it but it is not active in my body at this time. It can stay in remission for a few months, few years or forever. We are believing that God's plan for me is forever. Second, there is damage to my heart and kidneys. The question now is how much damage has been done to my heart and kidneys and is it permanent? Some of it is permanent and some of it may heal itself over the next year or so. Third, what type of treatments will I continue and will I need any other treatments. That will be up to the individual doctor's in charge of my various organs. Sounds pretty impressive doesn't it. Not really, it just means that now that the culprit is currently under control, the specialist can work on the organs themselves to try to fix what they can. Finally, as the last update mentioned, in December I will begin getting all of my childhood vaccinations again. Which underlines the biggest challenge for the next year. That challenge is stay away from places, people and things that could make me sick because it will still take a while for my immune system to fully recover from this process. So, for those of you that enjoy the Reader's Digest version, there you go. Now if you would like more nitty gritty details you can respond to this email and ask Trish and she will happily share her medical knowledge with you.

Today was expected to be a day of celebration. It is amazing how humans respond to things. I truly expected to be "jumping and leaping and Praising God" as we left Methodist today. I am praising God but our reaction was much more subdued. I think both of us actually felt numb as a chapter of this adventure closed and instead of closure, we just step into the next phase of this adventure. That may sound a bit down but it really isn't. We have been through so much, I think it really was just relief that we finally made it this far. You may remember that as recently as Thanksgiving, we thought that I may not have the transplant for several months. Then the whirlwind began. What a ride it has been. I want everyone to know that I have an amazing wife and she has been incredible the entire way. If you ever have to go through what we are going through, I hope that you have someone like Trish at your side. I don't know how she did it but she did and I am so thankful that 30 years ago through some amazingly silly decisions and circumstances, God crossed our paths and had the perfect match for me.

I cannot say enough about the great doctors and nurses that have brought me through this journey so far. If you ever need to be in the hospital, Methodist is the place to be. They have not earned being one of the best places to work in America for nothing. It is also one of the best places in America to be cared for when you're sick. The Cell and Gene Transplant Unit was amazing. All of my nurses are just amazing women. My doctors are the best. My primary doctor, Dr. Carrum is the greatest but as is always said, behind every great man is a great woman, well I am sure he has two great women behind him but we were only privileged to meet one, his nurse practitioner Audrey Scholoff, who is truly our "bff" ☺ There will never be enough good things to say about these wonderful people.

Lastly, it has been a very, Very stressful time. I fully believe that Trish's illness this week is nothing but stress. I don't think life is ever or will ever be stress free but the body and mind can only take so much. I think we have both reached our limit. That being said, we had planned a great celebration on May 2nd. Many have offered to help us as well. For now though, instead great celebration, it is time for us to take some time to rest. So, we will not have our big celebration on May 2nd as promised. We still want to get together with everyone and will sometime in the future but for now, we need to rest. We now can go out more and do more and hope that you we will be able to get together with everyone on a smaller scale over the next few weeks just to catch up and talk about something other than Amyloidosis. We have a lot of life to catch up on. Please feel free to call us or just come by and sit on the back porch and enjoy a glass of wine and sunset with us. It is amazing the show that God puts on every morning and evening. You should take time to enjoy it. He made it especially for us.

We will keep you posted periodically but hopefully there will not be any news to report. As they say, "no news is good news." God bless each of you for every prayer, card, hug, meal, and call that you have done on our behalf.

Love to all,
Chris & Trish



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 01, 2010 10:26 AM
To: Christopher Mims (cmims@farmersagent.com)
Subject: Chris Update #51

All went well at the big "100 Days" Restage testing session. They redid several tests, urine, blood and bone marrow biopsy to measure the effectiveness of the transplant at this point. All his blood work looked good – and the Transplant Team remains very happy with the results thus far.

We go on August 14th at 9:00am for a full review and discussion of all results from yesterday's tests. After that Chris will be released back to the care of his Hematologist, Nephrologist and Cardiologist.

We did find out yesterday that they will redo this same “restage” exercise at 1 year and that he will have to be revaccinated as if he were a newborn. It is as I suspected, they killed his bone marrow and along with it all the immunity he had from his childhood vaccination protocol. So for Christmas 2010 it looks as if Chris will get A LOT of shots! LOL!

More later after the August 14th review meeting.

Take care y'all! And Happy Easter!



From: Christopher Mims [mailto:cmims@farmersagent.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 11:34 AM
Subject: post transplant day 102 update

I want to get this out directly to my friends. Whether you follow me through Trish's updates, my Caringbridge Page, or Facebook, I want you to have this now. I have posted it on Caringbridge so you can ignore Caringbridge for today's update when you get the notification.

Have a great day and Great Easter for He is indeed Risen and has show His miraculous healing power in my body.

Post Transplant Day 102 - We have passed the magical day 100 without any pomp and circumstance and without any unusual problems. Tomorrow, we go in for "restaging" This basically means they are going to run all the major tests they ran before the transplant including 24 hour urine test which I am at home today participating in and a bone marrow biopsy. This will give them a comparison of how I am compared to before the transplant and let us know if I am in remission. We will not get the results of the tests until next week some time. We do not expect any surprises but until you actually hear that you are in remission, you still have some anxiety. The experts on the subject say that we will experience this anxiety off and on for the first year and then we may still have some thoughts over the years such as "is it still working and will it stop working?"

We appreciate your continued prayers and support. I will let you know the results as soon as we know them. Hopefully, the next time you hear from me will be the last time I have to report about my health and we can start talking about the other wonderful things that bind us together as friends.

Chris

Chris Mims

Chris Mims Insurance Agency



From: Christopher Mims [mailto:cmims@farmersagent.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2010 5:35 PM
Subject: Three Month Anniversary

Dear Friends and Family,

Today is the three month anniversary of my transplant. It may sound silly. Almost junior highish to be celebrating three months but it is a mile stone for us just like the 100 day mark on March 28th will be a milestone. A year ago we had no idea what was before us. Four months ago, we couldn't see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel without expecting it to be a freight train. Three months ago as we check into the hospital for the transplant, we were told life would never be normal again, expect 6 months to a year to recover, plan on me being in ICU, being on life support, have kidney failure, and being on dialysis for a while.

Today, I feel very good, can go to work some everyday, can drive the car on my own, can help Trish around the house, and can enjoy cooking again. I didn't have to go on life support. I didn't have kidney failure or dialysis. I am not back to where I was before I got sick and I have never been normal so we are not holding out any hope of normalcy but life is good. Life is very good. My prayer today and everyday is simply, "Thank you, Lord."

My life has changed because of the last year. I have learned I have some incredible friends who love me very much. I have learned that we all take so much for granted and it can be taken away from us so fast. I have learned to slow down a little and take time to enjoy the important things in life. I have learned to make some new priorities in life as well.

I want to thank all of you for your incredible support, prayers, and love during the past year. You are incredible. I want you to know, if you didn't already know, I have one incredible wife that has always been my strength and best friend. Without her unwavering love, support and care, I would not be here today. We are planning a celebration on life on Sunday, May 2nd. I hope many of you are able come to help us celebrate God's miraculous and loving power in our lives. If you have a moment today, please stop and thank God for healing me and answering all of our prayers.

Love to all,
Chris



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 6:14 PM

To: Christopher Mims (cmims@farmersagent.com)

Subject: Chris Update #50

We are thankful to God that we have only good news to report today.

We haven't actually SEEN a Doctor in three weeks so today was our regularly scheduled checkup. In all things have been going pretty well. Chris has been doing great, going to

work for partial days, and even helping around the house – folding clothes, vacuuming, etc. He’s also taken back the majority of the cooking responsibilities, although I don’t think he suffered any gravely ill effects from having to eat my cooking for the last few months. He’s had only one or two occasions where he had some very slight dizziness and no passing out at all in the last three weeks. His taste buds are working better and food is tasting good to him again. He’s spent WAY too much time watching the Food network the last few weeks and has about 100 recipe ideas he’s wanting to try out as well as a list of places he wants to travel to eat. His hair is beginning to grow back and we have kidded him and told him his head looks like it has mold growing on it. ☺ He’s having to shave again two or three times a week to keep from having that “rustic” look. So things are slowly returning to normal around here. Or at least what passes for normal in this house. ☺

All the news from today’s doctor’s visit was good. His kidneys are very happy with a Creatinine measurement of 1.4 mg/dL (normal) – and the best he’s had since late 2008! All his other numbers are within normal tolerances for VERY close to being within normal ranges. For the last three weeks we have been managing a tiny bit of fluid retention, but nothing serious and the medication used to resolve that issue has not caused any low Blood Pressure problems. In fact for the last three weeks his BP has been ranging on the high side and the Doctor had begun to back him off some of his BP meds. They believe the fluid retention issues of the last few weeks was caused by Fludrocortisone – one of the meds he was on to help keep fluid in his veins thus helping to keep enough volume resulting in less low BP issues upon standing. They have discontinued the icky breathing treatments and given him an oral suspension of Atovaquone to replace it as a preventative medication for PCP Pneumonia.

The really GREAT news is that his EKG has returned to normal and the Prolonged QT issue that they had seen in the last two EKG’s is gone! YEAH! Thank God!

He has been released to drive and do just about anything he wants. He still isn’t free to eat salads at salad bars, do any gardening or yard work, and he should still be cautious about large crowds where he might come in contact with anyone who is sick, but they told us it was OK to be out more than we have in the last two months. Church, movies, shopping etc, are OK now – but he does need to avoid being around anyone who we know is sick for a while longer. He should practice good “hand washing habits” to prevent the possible transmission of any viruses. They also have discouraged activity that would get his heart rate elevated for a while longer as well.

March 31st is his 100 Day’s ReEvaluation. They will redo a bunch of tests to determine the effectiveness of his transplant including the Bone Marrow Biopsy, 24 hour urine collection (to check the volume of protein lost in his urine), and blood tests to check for free light chains in his blood (which we hope not to find). Given the normal EKG today they are not going to redo an echocardiogram at this time, but have asked him to schedule an appointment with his cardiologist for monitoring and go forward with any recommendations she may have. About a week to 10 days after the March 31st Transplant ReStage appointment we will meet to review all the results and the plan at

that point is for the transplant team to release him and he will return to the care of his hematologist for monitoring from that point on. We already have an appointment scheduled with her on April 21st. We saw her today just for a brief visit and told her they were kicking us out of the Transplant Unit because Chris was making the other patients look bad by responding so well to his treatment. She just laughed and said she understood that!

Thank you all for your calls, cards, emails and support during the last 18 months. It has been a wild ride and I have no doubt we will still have some hurdles to jump in the future. We will still need help from time to time I have no doubt. Mostly it will be me needing help with “heavy lifting” and heavy projects in the yard. But I really want you all to know that we couldn’t have survived the last year and a half without you. You all are truly gifts from God and we are so grateful to be blessed with such great friends and family.

We are planning a BBQ for all of our family, friends and those who have helped us out. We are thinking Sunday afternoon May 2nd. Let us know if that would be a good day for you to possibly come out to Casa Mims for a casual afternoon of fun, food and fellowship. Let me know if you plan to attend – we’ll need to get a good count so we can have plenty of grub! If you got this email you and your family are welcome – just drop me a note and let me know if you plan to attend.

God Bless and keep you all until our next update.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 8:45 PM
To: 'Patricia Mims'
Cc: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #49

I guess you guys have figured out that if you only get an update once a week things are going ok. I’m very happy to report that things are more than OK, they are actually going pretty good!

We had our regular weekly Dr appt yesterday and they are still very pleased with his progress. He had commented on Saturday that it noticed he was feeling pretty good. At our Dr’s visit we found out why. His hemoglobin count is up to 13g/dl – normal is 14 – 18 which means that his bone marrow factory is back up and producing again which translates into “feeling pretty good”. The Doctor is so pleased that we don’t even have to go back for another visit until March 9th. I’m not really sure what I’m going to do with three whole weeks with no weekly Dr’s visits but I bet I find something to fill the time without much trouble. Chris’s other labs looked great. They didn’t redo his EKG to see about the “prolonged QT” they noted at our last visit. They do plan to redo that at the March 9th visit and if it hasn’t resolved they will get us into a cardiologist ASAP. They did tell me it is a new finding and didn’t show up on any of the many EKG’s and heart checks they did while he was hospitalized so they are 99% sure it is a medication induced

occurrence and should resolve on its own. They have adjusted the medication he was on that can cause that particular problem.

On the most unbelievable note, Chris actually went to the office today for about 3 hours. He was very happy to see something other than the inside of our house, or the inside of a hospital or Dr's office which is all he's seen since December 14 when he was admitted to the hospital for his transplant. In my spare time I've been trying to get the roses pruned for the spring, and I've managed to get all but three of the ones in the front done. If any of you ever decide to plant 50 or more roses on your property PLEASE call me first! I'll talk you out of it! It wouldn't be so bad except they didn't get pruned last fall due to Chris's illness so they were badly overgrown. All I can say is that the experience has been something akin to pruning razor wire. I don't recommend it! But I have prevailed despite the roses best effort to eat me alive!

I know that everything happens for a reason that God gives us what we need in every situation in our life. Chris is doing so much better for a reason. We got an email from a dear friend of ours this afternoon who has terminal pancreatic cancer. His email said he wasn't going to get well so by the time we received the email his suffering would be over and he was going to end his life. He had returned to Houston just a few weeks ago and made the mistake of telling us where he was staying. When we received the email we called 911 and headed straight for the hotel he was staying in to see if we could intervene in his plans to end his life. We did arrive in time along with two other friends of his and managed to convince him to come home with us for the next few days. He is very weak, and will not survive, but we will not allow him to be alone during this time. Thank God for giving Chris the strength to help this friend at a time when he most needs us. He has little family and we are just grateful that Chris has improved enough that we are able to let him stay here for a few days and get some rest and maybe gain a bit of strength. I don't know how long he will stay but at least for now he's safe and comfortable.

Please keep us and our friend David in your prayers.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2010 4:04 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #48

As promised, the post Dr visit update for the day.

Everything is looking good still. They are happy with his blood test results, and since he has had no further fainting spells with no IV fluids since last Friday they pulled the PICC line from his arm today. The worst part of this was the removal of the tape holding the line in place – otherwise it was an uneventful and painless procedure. Hopefully my duties have been scaled back to Patient Care Assistance instead of full blown RN administering IV fluids at home. ☺ He is having Physical Therapy at home twice weekly for two more weeks to help rebuild his strength and stamina. I had noted at her first visit that I recognized the PT person but couldn't figure out from where. Turns out she was a

Cheer Leader at my high school and we graduated in the same senior class. It is truly a small world. Moral to the story – be careful how you behave – you're momma will ALWAYS find out from someone what you have been up too!

Chris's restrictions are little by little being lifted. They told us today we can go to church but suggested that we arrive late, sit in the back and leave early to avoid "the masses". Good thing we go to a Methodist church where everyone wants to sit up front! When we went to the Baptist church the back was the most crowded! LOL! Same with eating out. They said be cautious but you can go during "off peak hours". Going to a movie is now a possibility but we will likely try that during the week when all the normal people are at work. ☺

I think Chris may actually try to go to the office once or twice next week. I don't know how that is going to work. It's going to be a transition for Connie and I both because we have been running the place quite successfully and as we saw fit for several months now. The transition to Chris thinking he's in control again could be amusing! Actually it may be tougher on him than us. But I have no doubt there will be interesting stories to come.

They did note that he has a "prolonged QT" on his EKG. I'm not sure if this is a new finding. He has had an abnormal EKG since Nov 2008 when we started this journey. In fact it was one of the first findings that led us to start trying to figure out what was wrong with him. They have asked us to make some alterations in his medications to see any difference can be noted. I've emailed the nurse to find out if this finding is something that has cropped up post transplant or if it is similar to the abnormal EKG he already had. I'll let you know what we hear on that next week. Oddly enough one of the symptoms of "prolonged QT" is syncope (passing out) – sound familiar?? More on this as I get information.

They did tell us today that if things are going along as they are now at next week's visit they will go ahead and release him back to his hematologist Dr Baker. She will take the reins back and be in charge of the "re-stage" at his 100 day mark post transplant. We've both missed seeing Dr Baker over the last few months, but we will miss Dr Carrum and Audrey and the rest of the staff at the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit too. I'm sure we will see them from time to time, but it looks like those weekly visits will be coming to an end before too long. They are an amazing group of people and we can't thank them enough for everything they have done to help us get Chris on the road to being healthy again.

Take care and have a good week. And PLEASE keep us in your prayers. I'm beginning to be cautiously optimistic. But there is a part of me that fears yet another unexpected "rug pulling" exercise – as in the rug being pulled out from under me. I certainly hope that will not be the case, but the best insurance against it is the continued prayerful intervention of our incredible friends and family who have supported us in so many ways during this experience. Thanks y'all! Until next week – I hope!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 2:41 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #47

Hi all,

I understand Punxsutawny Phil did see his shadow this morning and has predicted 6 more weeks of winter. Sorry to our friends in the frozen wastelands of the north. We're having our own version of a Houston winter – 55 and wet. BLECK!

I'm glad to report that we had our regular weekly Dr's appt today – and that is the ONLY visit we have had with anyone in the medical profession this week! YEAH! We did have a Physical Therapist come to the house to work with Chris to help build back his strength. She is coming twice weekly for at least a month. Chris has lost a lot of muscle mass in the stem cell transplant process, which is normal, but that has left him pretty weak and having lost a lot of stamina. Hopefully the exercise program she has put together will help him to begin to regain strength and muscle mass.

We've had a pretty good week. Only one dizzy spell to speak of since last Tuesday. They put him on a program of 500ML of IV fluids daily, which I've been administering at home. It seems the slight bit of extra volume in his circulatory system has done a great job of dramatically reducing the extreme low BP he had been experiencing upon standing. His red blood cell count is still a bit low, but his white count is great. This means his body is still in the process of regenerating bone marrow and thus not yet producing sufficient supplies of red blood cells. There is no need for transfusion at this time at all so that isn't a worry. And with time these blood volume issues will improve. They have cut his fluids back this week – he will get his 500ML on Wednesday and Friday and then if he is still doing well on Tuesday at our appt they will remove the PICC line in his arm. It seems we will not have the opportunity to try it out with IV Tequila. Oh well! Some things are just not meant to be!

The best news of all is that his kidneys are doing G R E A T! His creatinine is down to 1.4 which is WITHIN NORMAL RANGE for the first time since he went into the hospital in December! At his check up last Tuesday it was 1.9. He is still complaining of some tenderness around his mid section – mostly on the right side. They say that is likely some inflammation in his liver from the transplant process. They did do an ultrasound of his liver a couple of weeks ago and found nothing to be concerned about – as the nurse said “unremarkable”. Tehe! They are just watching and feel that the tenderness will go away as his body continues to heal.

Also of notable interest – the 48 hour heart monitor they did last week shows no abnormalities that could be accounting for his “fainting spells”. So they are sure that the dizziness is directly related to the effects of the Amyloid on his circulatory system. They did say he has very occasional “off beats” but nothing that is any cause for concern. Hum, Chris – slightly off beat???? Why isn't that a surprise! LOL!

In all a good report and a MUCH improved week over what we had been experiencing since he returned home from the hospital on January 5th. He did manage to walk from the

car to the Dr's office today and back with no ill effects. So we are very hopeful that he is on his way to regaining his strength and full recovery. If we get some nice weather this weekend he is planning to try and do some walking up and down the driveway. It's so easy to take for granted something as simple as just being able to hop out of the car and trot into the grocery store – and then you find yourself so weak it's a major challenge to walk to the bathroom. If you have learned anything from our experience I hope it has been to not take your health for granted. Had Chris not pursued visiting the Doctor in November 2008 when he found himself “tired all the time” I don't know where we would be today. Quite possibly with him so ill he would not be able to withstand the transplant process and with a fatal disease. You don't really realize how many “little things” you do every day that you will miss a lot if you suddenly lose your health. Don't take them for granted! Sorry – I'll stop preaching now!

Another good bit of news is his dietary restrictions are starting to be lifted. He can now have salad and fresh fruits/veggies if they are prepared at home and I am careful to wash them thoroughly. He actually had a salad this week with his dinner!

One more bit of GREAT news – at least for the dog's – is that they don't have to be completely restricted from him anymore. He does need to wear long sleeves and pants so they can't accidentally scratch him and he isn't supposed to let them lick him in the face, but he can at least hold them and pet them now. They are SO happy about that! This was today as soon as we got home from the Doctor! Little Caro was first in line for a tummy rub. He has to be careful to not let them scratch him, and no licking in the face, but he can at least hold and pet them now.



They did say that they will do a “restaging” at 100 days post transplant - late March. That involves all new blood tests, and new bone marrow biopsy to determine the effectiveness of the transplant itself on his disease. If the results of those tests still show

everything going well and he is otherwise doing fine they will release him back to the care of his Hematologist Dr Baker at that point.

We so appreciate the support and kindness of you all during this journey. The burden we have had to carry has been very heavy and everything you all have done to support us has made that much easier to bare! Thanks for your prayers, cards and emails – and visits – and food – and all the little things that have helped us so much. We can never repay you and we do truly appreciate it!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2010 3:58 PM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Cc: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #46

It's been a couple of weeks since I put out an update and I know some of you are wanting to know what's going on because you are emailing me privately. No problem! Here's the "mass consumption" note.

It's been a rocky couple of weeks, but I think we may – KNOCK ON ALL THE WOOD YOU CAN FIND – have turned at least a small corner and be meandering generally in the right direction. A couple of weeks ago Chris contracted an intestinal virus – adenovirus – and ended up with all the associate digestive upset. He lost 9 kilos in a week – about 18 pounds – ended up VERY dehydrated – and as a result was passing out every time he stood up. I think the subject of my last update had to do with him passing out and cracking his head open on the bathroom floor on Friday, January 15th. He literally could not stand and transfer from his "Flintstone's Chair" to the toilet without assistance because he would become very dizzy and very often completely pass out due to a drop in blood pressure. I didn't take but a day or two of this before I was at my wits end and ready to jump off the nearest building! The doctors had already started IV fluids several times a week because of the weight loss and dehydration from the stomach virus. He simply was not able to drink enough to keep up with the fluid loss from the stomach virus. And they couldn't give him any of the medicines that would normally be used to treat this virus because of his already compromised kidneys – so we had no choice but to let it run its course. At our visit last Friday they did get him to stand and he did comply and passed out within about five seconds – so I was vindicated and the doctors were able to see his neat trick and I think finally decided I wasn't just over reacting and being a pain in the neck.

They decided at our appointment last Friday to put a PICC line in his arm and let me administer the fluids at home so we could reduce the time and expense associated with us having to travel to the medical center daily. That seems to have done the trick and he seems to be on his way to recovery again. They expect to continue the fluids at home for probably another couple of weeks – this week at the same level as last and next week

cutting it back to every other day to see how he does. At that point they will probably remove the line from his arm if everything is going well.

This weekend he was able to talk back and forth to the bathroom from his recliner with no issues. His mom sat with him yesterday and I was able to run a couple of errands and go to the office for a couple of hours for the first time in over two weeks. It's pretty scary when going to work is a release but I can tell you it did me a world of good to get out and around regular healthy people if even only for a few hours! The only problem he has had with regard to "passing out" since last Friday was Monday morning when he altered his morning routine a bit and got out of bed before he had taken his blood pressure medicine. He usually takes his meds and lays there a few minutes to let them take effect – THEN he gets up. While he is feeling better a lot more – one tiny alteration in routine like that can have disastrous results at this point. He is still not anywhere near a point that he can be left alone so I expect his Mom will be here during the day a few days a week so I can go to the office and run errands. Anyone else wanting to offer some free baby sitting services during the day please let me know. ☺

We had our regular weekly check up today. Blood counts are continuing to recover and he's looking much better – and as noted feeling much better more of the time. He does have times when the switch unexpectedly moves to the off position and he just has to stop for a while. He is still very weak, and "feeling better" is relative. At this point walking back and forth to the bath room is about the extent of his days "big" activities – except for showering. You have NO idea how much energy it takes to shower and get dressed until you have no energy to spare and you have to use it for that! We will continue to administer IV fluids at home this week and hope and pray that we do not have any extra visits to the clinic before our next regularly scheduled visit on Tuesday – February 2nd.

Can someone PLEASE tell me how it got to be FEBRUARY ALREADY?!?!?!? It appears January blew by and I completely missed it! Let's just hope the ground hog does not see his shadow at our next appointment and we are not in for six more weeks of crazy up and down stuff – I vote for going right into spring and far fewer people in white coats being part of our daily lives!

The Doctors have ordered Physical Therapy to be done here at the office twice weekly for four weeks to help him rebuild his strength and continue his recovery. They did say today that they may be ready to release him from the transplant team back to his hematologist Dr Baker in the next few weeks. We didn't really expect this until sometime in the late spring to early summer, but they are happy with his recovery so far and still seem to be amazed at how well he has done compared to what they expected especially with regard to the more catastrophic complications they thought were quite likely in his case.

The Care Ministry at Grace United Methodist Church – our church – has been providing a couple of meals a week since Chris returned home and I can tell you it has been a God send! Trying to keep him upright and not crashing on the floor and take care of everything else has been a challenge to say the least. Why does the idea of a one armed

wall paper hanger keep coming to mind???? Anyway, thank you all for your continued support. We were just discussing that this has been going on for a year now. Long term illness is really something that takes a toll you in ways you can't even imagine. But God has been good and provided everything we needed when we needed it.

I hope I have no more news other than "everything's great" before next week!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, January 15, 2010 5:45 PM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'

Subject: Chris Update #45

I had so hoped not to have to put another of these out until next week and then to report an uneventful week and another good report from the Doctor. It was not to be.

Wednesday Chris developed some MAJOR stomach issues resulting in a call to the Clinic to see what they wanted to do. They put him on antibiotics because they felt the cause of the intestinal upheaval was and overgrowth of CDIFF bacteria in his gut resulting in pretty much running at both ends. They gave him a script for Flagyl, and asked that we bring him into the clinic on Thursday so they could check to be sure he wasn't dehydrated. Thursday they gave him fluids again. Thank goodness the Flagyl did the trick and stopped the propensity his body seemed to have developed in making every effort to turn itself inside out.

He is still having A LOT of trouble with the low BP. He gets very dizzy when standing and has mostly been using his little wheeled transport chair to move around the house doing his best imitation of Fred Flintstone. It's inconvenient and something he mostly uses just to get to the restroom. The rest of the time he's pretty much either stationary in his recliner or the bed. He can't really get up and do anything without getting dizzy which is usually followed by pretty severe nausea – not a pleasurable combination. We have been doing everything we can to keep fluid in him and try to combat the orthostatic hypotension but it has been a real uphill climb. He's very frustrated that while the Doctor's keep telling him he's doing GREAT – physically he's basically exactly where he was last summer when he was so sick. He can't be left home alone and really needs someone to do nearly everything for him since the result of him standing up is - at best him getting dizzy – at worst him passing out.

Now for today's adventure and the real reason for this note. Chris was sleeping in a bit this morning since he was up in the restroom peeing a lot last night and I thought he was still in bed. I had been trying to do a few things at the house before his mother arrived to sit with him for the day so I could go to the office. I was just about to go wake him and tell him he needed to at least get up and get some clothes on before she arrived. I suddenly heard a HUGE crash and knew immediately that what I would find in the bedroom wasn't going to be good. I ran in and found Chris unconscious on the bathroom floor. He had managed to get from the bed into his little Flintstone's Chair and pulled himself into the bathroom. He stood to transfer to the toilet and passed out cold.. He had

an episode of Syncope like had was having last summer and he went down like a 2 by 4. In the fall he hit a small chair we have in there as a second place to plop down if he finds himself dizzy on the rare occasions when he is standing.

Unfortunately he hit his head VERY hard leaving three very large lacerations one under his left ear, one above his left ear and one on the back of his head. Needless to say I freaked out – which for those of you who know me that is NOT something that happens often. There was blood all over the place and he was still incoherent on the floor. Since it took him a few seconds to regain consciousness I knew the order of the day was another trip to the hospital – this time to the ER. After a call to the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit to confirm our flight plan for the day we headed off to the hospital and spent all day at the ER getting him seen to. They did a CT scan to be sure there was no internal damage and added one additional antibiotic to his already impressive chemical cocktail and checked him out thoroughly. Dr Kamble from the Transplant Unit came down and told him to KNOCK IT OFF! But they did send him home instead of keeping him over the weekend which is what I suspected would happen. Chris is now sporting a nice white head dress and looking for all the world like some chief of a very peculiar Indian tribe. LOL!

We got back home about 4pm and needless to say, I'm am completely exhausted. And at least for the foreseeable future will be getting even less sleep than I was already getting because someone will have to be by his side any time he tries to stand until this phase of his recovery passes.

I've had a few emails from people asking what they could do to help. I'm trying to identify someone or some organization with a fully functional human cloning program so I can get about five copies of myself made. Perhaps then I can be more successful in being several places at once and also get everything else done that I need to get done. So far – no luck. But I was reminded today by friend and Pastor Mitch Peairson that we do serve the “God of Loaves and Fishes”. As overwhelmed as I am feeling at this very moment, I can say that we have had everything covered that we need covered – we don't have baskets full of left over, but we have what we need. If you don't know the story read Matthew 14 & 15.

Thanks for your prayers, calls and cards. We really appreciate everything that everyone has done to help and support us. Chris has been “ill” for nearly a year now – and I must say – this long term illness thing is not something I recommend. Your perseverance in continuing to support us over this long journey is so much appreciated and on so many days it really what keeps us able to put one foot in front of the other.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 12, 2010 9:06 PM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Subject: Chris Update #44

Hey all – Time for another update. We had our visit for post transplant check up today. We had originally been told we would have to go three times weekly for check ups. They

are so pleased with Chris's progress that we are only being required to visit the clinic for checks once weekly. We certainly hope and pray that this trend continues!

Chris is still having some issues with his old nemesis – low blood pressure. He does occasionally have issues with getting very dizzy when he goes from sitting to standing. He is managing to deal with it most of the time and we've had no incidents of falls so far. We certainly hope that trend continues as well!

Now for the Doctors Visit report. They did a Pentamidine respiratory treatment which he will receive monthly for the next couple of months. This treatment is an anti-microbial preventative treatment so that he does not develop pneumocystis carinii pneumonia – PCP. They said they normally would put patients on Baytril as a preventative measure, but can't with Chris because of his kidney issues.

His white blood cell count continues to be good but his kidney's are still unhappy. His creatinine is up to 2.1 which is the wrong direction. They feel that this is a result of him being somewhat dehydrated. They did give him 500ml of fluid today and instructed him to continue his good fluid intake at home but alter the make up of what he drinks to include more gatoraid and juice and less water. His other numbers are looking pretty good. They want him to eat several small snack/meals a day rather than three large meals. They also cut his anti viral drug Acyclovir dosage in half as well since it can be a bit hard on the kidneys especially if you are not properly hydrated.

They did say that the trick with Amyloid patients is to keep things in a reasonably balance and that they really don't expect to see a lot of "improvement" on his numbers until at least 100 days post transplant and that it can be 6 months to a year in some cases. For our next week visit they will be redoing his 24 hour urine collection to see how much protein he is losing through his kidneys, as well as all the free light chain numbers in his blood stream. Hopefully the free light chains should be within normal tolerances since they were prior to transplant and nothing they have done should have made that go upside down again.

I can say that he is getting stronger by the day. He's very frustrated that he's not well already, but he is recognizing that he is improving. He walked from the parking garage to the elevators inside the hospital today. Only last Thursday at our first visit after his release from the hospital there was no way he could have done this and he required a wheel chair to get up to the clinic.

Thanks for your continued support and prayers. Chris isn't out of the woods yet, but the doctors are happy with his progress at this point.

From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 07, 2010 3:42 PM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Subject: Chris Update #43

Well, We had our first post hospitalization check up today. And all the news is still good! It was a bit of an adventure getting us both ready and out the door by 8am so we could be on time for the appointment, but we managed and got there at 9:25am for a 9:30am appointment. You don't really realize how sick Chris has been until you are trying to get showered and dressed and transported across town on what resembles a normal morning schedule. As he gets stronger these trips will be a bit less daunting no doubt. They were so pleased with his progress that they said we don't have to visit again until this coming Tuesday and if he looks as good next week as he did today, they say we will only be required to make trips in for check up's once a week instead of three times a week as we originally expected.

White cell counts are up to 9.25 and hemoglobin is looking great at 11.4. His creatinine is back up to 1.8 but "ins" and "outs" are good and he's definitely improving so they feel that this number is going to bounce around for the next couple of months. His fluid retention in his legs is dramatically improved but we are still battling the old low blood pressure demon. At the Dr's visit today we discussed a different strategy in management of his diuretic that is used to control fluid retention. Most likely the creatinine "bump" is a result of the diuretic as is the low bp which is flushing too much fluid from his vascular system. This is resulting in his blood pressure dropping dramatically when he goes from sitting to standing. The Dr has told us today to go back to the strategy we used very successfully to deal with the low BP issue this past summer. He will take the diuretic only on mornings when he has gained at least two or three pounds over night and take it for only one day and then lay off at least one day to see how his weight and BP respond. I have no doubt we will have his BP issues well in hand in the next couple of days using this strategy again.

The Doctor encouraged him to eat several small meals a day and do what he can to put calories into his diet. He's been ordered to drink milk shakes, eat ice cream and anything else he can think of that will add calories into his diet. They do not want him losing any weight at the moment. Don't you wish some Doctor would give you license to eat anything you want???

He is very cold right now. If I get a chance I need to try and go out to purchase one of those "electric throws" so he can be warm in his chair and everyone else in the house doesn't have to bake – especially given the extreme low temps we are expecting this weekend. Below is what I've been seeing since he returned from the hospital. A pile of blankies with a very old Texas A&M stocking cap sticking out. Occasionally the creature under the blankies emerges to request a beverage or some other delivery. But he's really enjoying being at home, watching his own TV, lounging in his own chair and sleeping in his own bed.



Thanks for your ongoing support, calls, cards, emails and prayers. We hope to continue to amaze the Dr's at our future visits!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2010 7:43 PM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'

Subject: Chris Update #42

Subtitle: Elvis has left the building!

He's home! YEAH

Here's a few shots of him taken this morning just before his discharge with some of our favorite staff at the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit.



Clotelle & Rachel



Ana



Evelyn

He's doing well and his kidneys are holding their own. So he's been released from the Maximum Security Unit to the Trustee's unit at home. He's been warned that the warden at the trustee unit is one tough cookie! These ladies pictured above made the last three weeks so easy for me and they took GREAT care of him when I couldn't be there. He's doing well – but cold – I'm going to have to get an electric blanket tomorrow.

Here's a shot of us leaving the hospital



For the next month he's not allowed out of the house except for our trips to the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit for his twice weekly checks. He's on a "neutropenic" diet which means he can have anything he wants that is cooked to death. No salads, raw fruit or veggies and all well done meats. But this is only for the first month. He's looking forward to the night in his own bed.

More updates as we have fun stuff to pass on!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Sunday, January 03, 2010 2:29 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #41

Hey all. We go the word a little while ago that Chris will not be coming home on Monday after all. His Creatinine has spiked up to 1.8 which is well outside the normal

levels. And this means as the Doctors told him “His Kidneys are unhappy”. They want his creatinine at 1.6 or lower before they will consider releasing him. Odd thing his this measurement had gotten this high for a day or two after his chemotherapy just prior to transplant, but come back down to 1.4 almost overnight. The doctors think this high Creatinine # is a result of the usage of Lasix to keep extra fluid from building up in his body. They have switched to another diuretic to see if it makes a difference, but unfortunately this will delay his homecoming until they have time to see if this is going to work or not.

He is very disappointed and SO ready to be OUT of this hospital and not be a “sick person” anymore.

Please pray specifically that Chris’s kidneys shape up and start acting right sooner rather than later and that his mental status will remain positive even though we have seeming hit a bump in the road to recovery.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Saturday, January 02, 2010 9:06 AM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #40

Happy New Year a day late!

Chris is still doing well and scheduled to come home on Monday. They have him off all pain meds, and are beginning to wean him off the IV antibiotics. He’s beginning to be able to eat and keep solid food down. It won’t surprise any of you to find his first meal of choice after treatment was macaroni and cheese. ☺ He does have one place in his throat that is still kind of bothering him, but nothing that really requires any intervention.

The Doctors are amazed at his progress and of the 6 patients transplanted the same day as him they say he is only one of 2 that is even CLOSE to being ready to go home. God is good and we are so happy for the miracle that has been done with Chris’s treatment!

They are trying a new diuretic to replace lasix – Amiloride. We’ll see how that works. He is still having some fluid accumulation issues which was to be expected, but the IV lasix is washing out his potassium at a ridiculous rate. No doubt we will be doing a balancing act with fluid accumulation for the next several months. This ongoing fluid retention is partially a side effect of the chemotherapy his was given and partially his kidneys which are functioning well but somewhat unhappy. They say that this should improve markedly about three to four months post transplant.

He is very anxious to get home and I can tell he’s feeling better because is complaining about being sick of being in the hospital! LOL!

Today and tomorrow I'll be spending most of my time running my errands and doing things around the house that are part of his discharge instructions. Being my normal over achieving self I asked for those several days ago so I wouldn't get them on Monday as we walked out the hospital door and find out I had a week's worth of work to do and no time to do it! The only thing that really was a big deal, and really only would be for crazy dog people like us, is that the Dr's suggested it would be a good idea to freshly bathe all the dogs just before he gets home to cut down on any potential dander, allergens etc. They suggest freshly dusting and vacuuming, removing any live plants from the rooms he'll be in, freshly washing bed linens and changing AC filters. Two of my dachshund club buds and one other dachshund person are coming tomorrow to help with the dog cleaning up and whatever else needs doing – THANKS GUYS!

Given the stuff I need to get done today and tomorrow to be ready for his return home, I won't be at the hospital much this weekend. If any of you have time to visit this weekend it would go a long way towards helping him keep his mind of being incarcerated. ☺

I'm sure my next update will be after he gets home.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, December 29, 2009 7:55 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Cc: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Subject: Chris Update #39

After a visit with one of the transplant coordinators this afternoon we have been told they plan to release Chris on Monday!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Psalm 86:12

I will **praise** thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

All I can say is that this experience has made God so real to me. He always was but then I've never had to trust Him through anything even remotely like this before. To watch His hand in the last year – in changing me – trusting Him through the road we have traveled thus far – and working a miracle in the health of my husband– I am humbled and amazed. While we have had some dark days – and may have a few more, the result of Chris's treatment thus far have been “miraculous” – and that is the word used by the Transplant Team. They don't know what to say. They are in awe of what has happened. All I can say is God is gracious and good and to Him must go the credit for what has been nothing short of amazing.

For those of you who have prayed so earnestly for Chris, and myself during this experience, all I can say to you is this should make it SO REAL to you that prayer works.

Thank you for your continued support. It seems I will lose my full time nursing staff next week and the fun will no doubt begin in earnest! ☺



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, December 28, 2009 8:15 PM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'

Subject: Chris Update #38

Continued good news! Thank God! This has been a miracle. I was visiting this afternoon with the Nurse Practitioner who is one of the transplant coordinators and she said Chris has done MUCH better than they ever expected give his disease and the number of systems he has with known Amyloid related issues. The Transplant team began to discuss “going home” today! It will be a week or a bit more still, but they are planning to remove his pain meds tomorrow and see how he does. He’s doing so much better than just a few days ago he is not making any additional “requests” from the pain pump beyond the baseline dosage. His white count is continuing to rise and they are planning to begin weaning him off all the IV antibiotics later this week and then watch a few days to be sure no infection rears its ugly head.

The only bad news I have to report is that his hair is thinning badly and they will be shaving his head tomorrow so that his bed isn’t all full of hair making him itch. Sad to see it go, but it will grow back and getting him healthy is worth the loss of hair for a brief period! Our hairdresser volunteered to come do it but they will not allow anything other than their own sterilized equipment and their nurses to avoid any chance of potential cuts which might cause infection.

If any of you have any questions about the effectiveness of prayer, let me tell you – this episode in our lives should remove all doubt about that. Catching this disease before Chris was too sick to have it treated was just the first in a very long line of miracles in this story. Daily we have seen God provide in ways we didn’t even know we needed.

Thank you all for your friendship and support during this chapter of our lives. Keep up the prayers – He’s got a long way to go to be back to his old self so more bent knees will be needed!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Sunday, December 27, 2009 6:42 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #37

Good news at today's Doctors rounds again! Thank God!

Things are still going well and the Doctors say that Chris is right where he needs to be. He still is having some issues with fluid retention so they are still doing small doses of lasix a couple of times a day to prevent a fluid overload which could lead to all kinds of really bad things we don't want to happen. Unfortunately it also means he gets very dizzy and disoriented when he stands up so his exercise time is still very limited and done at bed side so if he gets dizzy he can sit down immediately. He also is still having issues periodically with nausea and associated digestive upset. The issues he was having with the sores in his throat are ongoing, but very much reduced from their peak a couple of days ago. He actually ate some plain pasta and a couple of cookies today. That's pretty much the first solid food he's had in about a week. So that's moving in the right direction as well.

The doctors told us that they had isolated the source of the infection that reared its ugly head a couple of days ago. It was bacteria common on everyone's skin, but it was found in one of the two leads of his Hickman Catheter in his chest. We had originally thought it was something that entered his body through a scrape he got on his arm during a fall last week. He is responding well to the antibiotics and has had no further fever or indication that the infection wasn't immediately contained by quick action on the part of the transplant team. I had no idea, but when they drew the blood for the cultures to identify the cause of the fever, they draw from each lead on his catheter and his arm. Then they are able to identify the exact source and type and target the bacteria very specifically when administering antibiotics.

The Team did say that his white count is beginning to rise, but only the lymphocytes. Not the neutrophils. Here's your biology lesson for the day – the lymphocytes help your body destroy tumors, the neutrophils help your body fight off infection. According to the Doctors they like to see this response in an Amyloid patient because the Lymphocytes will kill off any of the monoclonal plasma cells that produce the amyloid that may have escaped all the other treatments done to rid Chris's body of these. They say that when an Amyloid patient responds as Chris is with the Lymphocytes coming back first they typically see a much more favorable response to the transplant process than if it were the other way around. So he's still very susceptible to infection, but his body is moving in the right direction. Again, Thank God!

Chris is on what is called a Neutropenic Diet – He's not really able to keep a lot down at the moment and is still suffering from nausea and other digestive issues associated with his Chemo two weeks ago, but they do think in the next couple of days that should start to subside quickly. Goodies are welcome, but please review what is allowed at this website <http://www.upmc.com/HealthAtoZ/patienteducation/Documents/NeutropenicDiet.pdf> Also, anything with any strong odor isn't a good idea. He isn't very "smell" tolerant right now. ☺

Also remember, no flowers, plants or anything like that are allowed on the unit at all –

visits are appreciated, but save your money because you won't be allowed on the floor with flowers.

I will be at our offices from 10am to 3pm Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and going to the hospital for a couple of hours in the late afternoon. If anyone has time to visit this week during the day I know he would appreciate having some entertainment since I won't be there to keep him occupied!

Thank you guys so much for your ongoing prayers, calls, cards, emails and all the other ways you have supported us during this process. We can't express enough how we appreciate it.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Saturday, December 26, 2009 5:56 PM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Cc: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #36

13 of the estimated 21 days down! I can hardly believe it! We are nearly 2/3rds through the expected 3 week hospitalization for Chris's stem cell transplant!

I've not put out an update for the last few days because I have been staying the hospital round the clock. Chris fell again on Thursday night and scraped his arm pretty badly. It became clear on Friday morning that he just needed more attention than the nurses were going to be able to reasonably give so my Mother in law came to the house to care for our dogs and I went to the hospital to care for Chris. The Corgi's are getting a vacation at Camp Mauldin so that the dog load here was more manageable for her. Guy says they are doing fine and don't seem to act as if they have been abandoned. Little ingrates! And I thought they needed me! LOL!

The last few days have been long and tiresome. Chris has been in the worst throws of the chemo side effects and has been feeling pretty poorly. Actually VERY poorly. His white cell counts reached .24 – basically all but zero and he has been nauseated and unable to eat and barely able to even tolerate water. Part of the side effects are “mucositis”. His throat, esophagus and intestinal tract are covered in soars and he can not swallow without being in great pain. They put him on morphine for this, but that made his nausea worse and he was throwing up more so they switched that to delaudid which worked much better to control his pain and didn't make him nauseated in the process. Thank God this drug did relieve his pain much more effectively and he is now getting past that point in the process and not having such a difficult time with that particular side effect. Two days ago he described the pain when trying to swallow as a 12 on a 10 point scale and 8 to 9 when not trying to swallow. Today he said it was a 3 or 4 when trying to swallow and a 0 to 1 when not trying to swallow. So he has made some great strides in getting through this phase.

He did spike a fever on Friday night resulting in them doing all kinds of cultures and starting him on Vancomycin antibiotic until the cultures came back giving them the information they need to target the antibiotics more specifically. We did find out today that the cultures grew bacteria that is common on everyone's skin. It's likely the scrape on his arm from the fall Friday night was the pathway for the bacteria into his body. Given his non-existent immune system during this post chemo phase this kind of thing could literally be fatal. Thank God the antibiotics worked immediately and he has not had any fever or any other sign of any difficulty from this incident. The doctors have told him that he will likely be kept a couple of days longer in the hospital to be absolutely sure that there won't be a post release issue with any infection.

In the last couple of days he has received 2 units of blood and one unit of platelets to help restock his blood supply since his bone marrow is "offline" right now. His white cell count has come up to .4 as of today and the doctors say that they will be prepared to say the transplant has taken and the stem cells are setting up shop and working if his white cell count is up again tomorrow. They did say it is very common for the white cell count to take slight bump, then go back down for a day or two and then start its rise in earnest. So we continue to watch and wait for the word that the transplant has begun to work. Also, thank God his kidneys are still functioning and have returned to the level we had pre transplant. We are hoping and praying they will return to normal as a result of this transplant process. They say we should expect to see improvement in his kidney function about 90 to 120 days post transplant – so even after he is released from the hospital we will have a good bit of waiting yet to do.

He is still having minor issues with fluid and is getting a small dose of lasix two times daily so he is having some issues with lightheadedness and dizziness when he stands. Nonetheless he had a physical therapy session today where he stood and marched by the side of his bed for about 20 minutes. He showered, sat up in a chair for a while and then headed back to bed to recover from the activities of the morning. We did laugh while the therapist was there since she had him stepping from side to side. He is working diligently to get back up to speed and be able to go back to Heidi's class in the least possible amount of time!

So far so good – and he continues to improve. Hence I'm going to enjoy an evening home in my own bed. The torture device they have in the room for the attending family member to try to sleep on leaves a lot to be desired! I can assure you I am very grateful for a night at home – and the dogs are very glad to see me too.

Hopefully Chris will feel even better next week and be more able to really enjoy visits and calls. Thank you all for your continued support during the experience. We couldn't have done it without you!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Wednesday, December 23, 2009 6:26 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #35

In Matthew 8 and Mark 4 there is a story about Jesus speaking to the wild, storming sea “and there was great calm”.

While I see the sea raging all around me “there is great calm”.

Chris is doing well – although he is in the worst stages of the reaction to the Chemo. He is now 7 days post transplant and he is having nausea, and finally reached the stage where the drug has basically gutted his intestinal tract. He has open sores all the way down his throat, into his stomach and through his intestinal tract. It is part of the expected side effect of the chemotherapy drug Melphelan. He was in a great deal of pain from this when I arrived at the hospital this morning. Even trying to drink room temperature water was like pouring hot grease down his throat. They have put him on a morphine PCA pump to help with the pain. By the time I left at 4pm he looked like a new man and was sitting up in the bed drinking an Ensure over ice to try to get some liquid and nutrition down him.

The doctors and nurses have told us both that this is to be expected and the other patients that underwent stem cell transplant on the same day as he did have been on the pump for a couple of days already. He is discouraged somewhat and I don't think either of us really realized how bad the side effects would be – despite being told repeatedly, but he is retaining a tiny bit of humor and trying to focus on getting well. I told him today that while I couldn't bring him beer to drink while watching the bowl games I would certainly bring a clean empty beer bottom up for him to drink his Ensure out of so he could perhaps fool himself into thinking he was home watching the football games on TV. He thought he could have a good time with the doctor with that. I'm not sure it's a good idea to play practical jokes on your Dr. ☺

We have been repeatedly assured that he is “right where they expected” about this time. His kidney's are compromised but functioning at the level they were when he went into the hospital with in's and out's generally matching up and a good volume and his Creatinine at 1.2 and BUN back into normal ranges. His white cell count is a REALLY low .26 as of this morning and they think it may be another day or so before it completely bottoms out and he turns the corner and begins heading back up the hill towards recovery. He is having some fluid retention issues which is partially a chemo side effect and partially a compromised kidney function side effect. The Doctors seem comfortable at this point and say they are doing everything they can not to stress the kidneys anymore than they absolutely have to. They did another ultrasound on his arms today to just double check that there are no blood clot issues associated with the catheter in his chest. Again those came out negative so the swelling in his hands and arms is – again most likely a combination of chemo side effect and somewhat impaired kidney function.

He did have the gals from Physical Therapy come up today and help him “march” while holding on to a walker at bedside since he’s really not capable of walking the halls right now as they want him to. We laughed – he’s back in the marching band! He’s too weak right now to walk and his blood pressure won’t really allow it at the moment since it is still getting quite low when he stands resulting in dizziness and nausea.

He’s doing his best to keep his spirits up, but he is really and truly feeling pretty bad at the moment. The transplant team tells him that he will likely continue to feel pretty icky until about Saturday – maybe Sunday – but by early next week he should definitely be on the uptick and much more able to enjoy visits and calls. Thankfully he’s doing well enough that I have been able to come home at night and get a good night’s sleep for the last couple of nights. I hope and pray that continues because once he is released I’ll need all the stored up energy I can get! The nurses have declined the offer to come home with us so he has a “staff of women” to help care for him. We had to laugh this morning because he had me, two nurses and a nurses aid helping him shower, brush his teeth, comb his hair and get back to bed. I think that setting a precedence of four woman helping with such menial chores may not be a good idea for the post hospital at home recovery phase. We’ll just have to see how that goes!

God Bless you and yours during this holiday season. I’ll get another update out in a couple of days.

Merry Christmas!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Monday, December 21, 2009 4:29 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #34

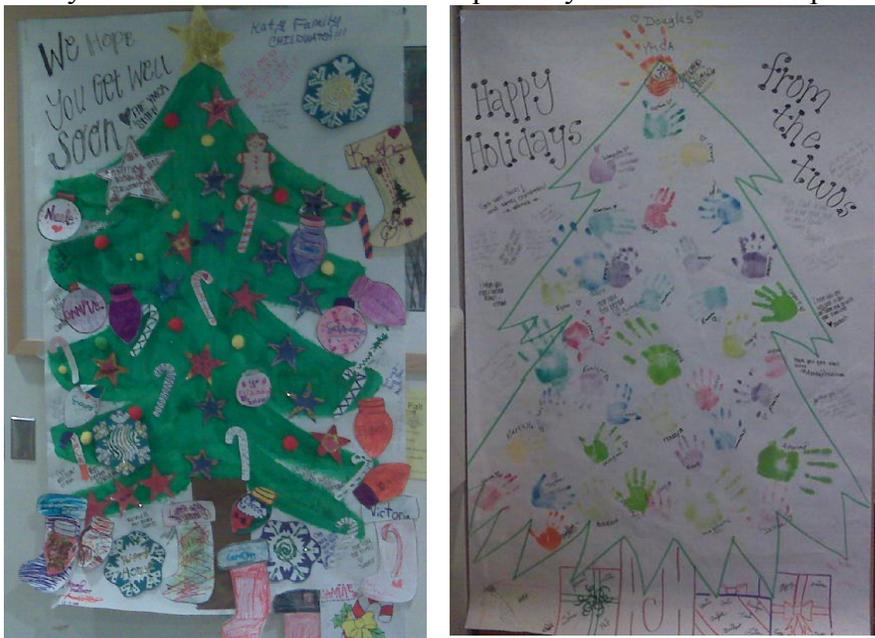
Subtitle: The Seven Levels of Complete Exhaustion!

I’ve finally returned home after spending all of Saturday and Sunday at the Hospital with Chris. I’ve learned that if you can maintain your sanity and sense of humor while subsisting on hospital food, short cat naps on “lounge chair” that was apparently developed as a torture device, and deal with a critically ill loved one whose needs change by the moment you are worthy of the title “Wonder Woman”.

At my last update Chris had fallen on Friday night and cracked his head. He ended up creating a laceration under his right ear and having blood to come out of his ear - while I was home enjoying the last night of restful sleep I was able to enjoy. Turn your back for one minute! They did do a CAT scan, and confirmed he has a brain that is apparently functioning and his head is harder than whatever it was he hit because he did no damage other than the laceration. Thank God for protecting him during that fall! But given the fact that he apparently misunderstood some part of “DO NOT GET OUT OF BED

UNLESS SOMEONE IS IN HERE WITH YOU!” I stayed at the hospital the last two nights to be sure he was safe – mostly from himself. ☺

Saturday proved pretty uneventful and Sunday was great! We had LOADS of visitors and he really enjoyed seeing everyone. Randal Sitton visited on Saturday evening, and we had a ball talking with him for a while. Thanks so much Randal for buying me dinner at the Methodist Cafeteria so I got a few minutes out of the room! Sunday was Connie Stirgus and her daughter Paige, another of our old UH Buds Dale Englefield, and Mike and Allyson Edwards. And later that evening David Bertman stopped by for a much appreciated visit to help pass the time. Everyone came bearing gifts so Chris doesn't feel quite so excluded from Christmas this year. Allyson brought to lovely posters done by the Katy YMCA Childwatch kids to help brighten his room, wish him a speedy recovery and Merry Christmas all in one fell swoop. Everyone has loved the posters! Thanks Kids!



Now on to the most important news – things are going very well. The Dr's are very pleased with his response so far. His white cell count is nearing zero and we then wait for it to start to come back up as the stem cells begin to engraft, set up shop and go to work. So far his kidneys are responding well for which we are very grateful, and we have had none of the potentially life threatening side effects that we were told might be more likely with him given that he is an Amyloid patient. He is having trouble with his old friend orthostatic hypotension as a result of the significant amount of Lasix they have used to ensure no fluid overload – which would lead to some of the more frightening complications of which we were warned. He isn't "out of the woods" just yet, but the Doctors are very happy with his response and hopeful that things will continue to go as they have been – largely uneventful. They are still watching him closely and we have taken steps to being to resolve a lot of the orthostatic hypotension so he can stand up without passing out. Hopefully in a day or two that particular battle will be more in control so he will be able to start walking the halls and not be trapped in a room – however nice, roomy and well decorated – it does still get old.

He is still having some nausea issues and the chemo diarrhea finally hit this morning. So far just once though. And he was able to hold his breakfast of a blueberry muffin down as well as his plain baked potato lunch. So at least on that front we may be seeing some progress in the right direction.

I did end up staying at the hospital last night because after all the fun died down for the day, I was about to leave to come home and discovered his right arm was swollen badly. They thought he had potentially developed a blood clot associated with his Hickman Catheter. It took a while to get the tests done that yielded nothing – no clots etc. They think it was just that he had his arms folded and hanging down too much yesterday. They are watching it but it appears that the fluid accumulation is beginning to diminish with him keeping the arm slightly elevated and laying down a bit more than he did yesterday. If it's not one thing it's another. By the time they decided everything was OK, I was just WAY too tired to drive home. I'm glad I stayed because he had a very difficult time showering and getting dressed this morning from the low BP issues. I think the nurses were happy to have the extra set of hands to get him taken care of and ready for the day.

I'm not going to be at the hospital a whole lot tomorrow unless there is some catastrophe that requires it. I have a few things to do that have to do with keeping our life running while he is going through this process. I'm sure he would appreciate emails to cmims@farmersagent.com, calls to the room 713-441-1536 or cell phone, texts and Skypes to chris.mims tomorrow to help keep his mind occupied while I'm not with him. I know he would appreciate visits in person too if you are healthy and have time. They have also told us that he should be feeling a lot better by Christmas. What a Christmas present! He gets to start all over again with a new life! And really well by the week between Christmas and New Years – so if you guys are off that week and have time to visit – by then there will be one REALLY bored Chris who could use some entertainment I'm sure!

I must say that during the last year of dealing with Chris's illness the thing I have been most concerned about was surviving the three weeks that he would be hospitalized for his stem cell transplant. Today, we have week one of the three down. Two more to go. God has been so good to provided exactly what we needed, when we needed it. And while it really kind sucks to be in the hospital over Christmas, for us it has ended up being a time when we have fewer days to worry about the office because of the holidays, and have had lots more friends able to pitch in here and there and do a bit to help us keep our heads above water.

Thank you all so much for your support during this time. You'll never really know what it means to us.

Merry Christmas!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Saturday, December 19, 2009 8:32 AM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Subject: Chris Update #33

Well, so much for me trying to sleep at home and get some rest. Chris is refusing to follow the nurses orders to stay in bed. He got up last night thinking he could just stand by the bed, collapsed and hit his head pretty hard. There is now blood in his ear and they are ordering a Cat Scan to be sure he didn't do other damage. It's clear that I'm not going to be able to stay at home for at least the next few nights.

Since I can't send email from the hospital for some reason I may not get updates out for a few days. Sorry!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, December 18, 2009 7:11 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #32

We're DONE with the stem cell transplant! YEAH! Now we enter the waiting room again. BOO!

The infused the last batch of previously collected Stem Cells this morning and Chris has another enjoyable tour in what we have affectionately dubbed "Ativan Land". :->

Good news – Creatinine is down a bit from the 1.8 recorded a couple of days ago. Input on fluid is still fairly closely matching output of fluid – so his kidneys – while being insulted and throwing a bit of a tantrum haven't gone belly up as they were afraid they might. His Uric Acid – another indicator of kidney issues was up a bit today and they gave him something to counteract that. They said it could be just a bit more of "kidney tantrums" or it could be from the ongoing dosages of lasix they have used to make sure he does not begin to build up any fluid. They are watching his electrolytes and other markers very closely and have been giving bags of calcium and potassium here and there to keep everything on an even keel.

They have said over the course of the next three to four days things are going to get rocky. He still hasn't had the brunt of the chemo effects hit him yet. They have told him to expect to feel pretty louse, fever, diarrhea, nausea etc until about Monday afternoon through Tuesday. I just got off the phone with him and found out that he got lost in his bathroom after I left. His blood pressure dropped and he got disoriented. The staff was there quickly and he's now been ordered to stay in bed unless someone is in the room with him. I may end up having to make arrangements to spend the night at the hospital for the next couple of nights. We'll just see how it goes.

The Doctor Team is happy with his response so far, but are not prepared to say he's "out of the woods" so to speak. They said that it will be another week or so before they will be

ready to say that he may have dodged the nastier possibilities of things that could go wrong as part his body's response to the transplant. For now, we ride out what looks as if it may be a stormy weekend and wait for his white cell count to start coming back up.

My amusement for the day was watching him again in "Ativan Land". He told me at one point his lap top had been broken into or maybe just jostled around in the cab yesterday. And also that he and Jeff were going to the air show, but he didn't want to eat at Red Lobster. He mumbled and bumbled a bunch of other disconnected things – like wanting to know why he didn't have all the ingredients to do his cheesecake, and where were my mashed potatoes while he was on his little drug induced trip this afternoon. He had a number of conversations with people who only he could see too. He got really frustrated at one point and told me he really hated being so dopey. I told him to just sit back and enjoy the ride and nap. LOL! For anyone who wants to get a way for a while I'd recommend this drug based on what I've seen the last couple of days. Sorry, my sense of humor is a little sick, but I knew he was OK and some of the stuff he was coming up with was just pretty amusing. I did resist the urge to video it on my Blackberry and put it on Youtube! LOL! For that he will be very grateful in the future I have no doubt!

Also on the good news front after today he probably won't be enjoying in more "chemically induced trips" and should be more lucid and able to hold a conversation that makes some sense if you call or visit. He is very much enjoying his Skype conversations with friends and family so even if you can't visit you can talk to him and help him pass the time a bit using this amazing technology. www.skype.com – his user name is chris.mims . He's already frustrated at the limited surroundings and being "stuck" in a room – with access only to the short bit of hallway in the isolation unit. He asked for a weekend pass from the Dr's today – they declined with a chuckle.

He also had a laugh at his Dr's expense this morning. He ate a VERY green life saver just before they came in for rounds. Consequently the inside of his mouth and tongue were REALLY green. When his Transplant Dr asked him to stick out his tongue it really was the most shocking shade of lime green . She is a Kiwi and has a great sense of humor but she nearly died! I have to say, I saw his tongue and it was VERY, VERY green! She laughed but told him NEVER to scare her like that again. So Chris's sense of humor will apparently survive the procedure. Good news to all I know.

Please keep Chris in your prayers over the weekend. It sounds as if it won't be an easy few days, but they have told us both what to expect and that he just needs to sit back and allow himself to go with the icky feeling – not to fight – it will pass in a couple of days. He needs to let me and the staff take care of him. He's going to be down – but they say by Christmas he should be well on his way back up the other side of the hill from this little weekend valley. A pretty cool Christmas present if you ask me!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2009 8:03 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #31

Short, sweet and all good news. Chris is doing well. Kidneys are still “insulted” at the treatment, but input is matching outgo even though the numbers on creatinine remain a bit high. They said that will probably stay that way through the course of the treatment and may take several weeks to return to his old 1.2 normal reading from the 1.8 we have now.

We were told that he had 20 bags of stem cells. Turns out there are only 15 and we apparently misunderstood something somewhere. He got 5 more of the 15 today for a total now of 10. Uneventful thankfully! So tomorrow will be the last 5 and we’re on to the next phase – sit and wait. They did dose him with Benedryl and Ativan again so my amusement for the day was listening to the conversations he was having with the invisible people in the room only he could see! At one point the dogs were there and he was scolding them to get off the bed because they weren’t supposed to be there. He decided at one point that the Oxygen finger thing he had to keep up with is O2 Saturations in his blood was Katy biting his finger. He kept telling her to stop it was hurting Daddy. ☺

Skype is working REALLY well. He got to see and talk to face to face his Mom and younger brother today. I think he’s on there with my baby sister right now. It’s a great way to give him some mental and emotional support while he is incarcerated in the Cell and Gene Unit at Methodist. He’s done five days and has a little over 2 more weeks to go. January 5 is still his target release date. If you have a webcam on your computer its free and I think you will love it. www.skype.com – his user name is Chris.Mims. You may have to send him and email at cmims@farmersagent.com to tell him to turn on his computer, but so far this is a wonder of technology that we have really enjoyed.

We had two visitors today and his friend John Poulter from church came bearing a HUGE bag of Christmas cookies and candy. YUM! John was witness to some of his amazing tales while in his drug induced state. Our Big Sister from UH Nancy Hess also visited today and she also got to hear some of his amusing ramblings.

Praise God I have not much else to report!!! I am home again tonight for what I’m sure will prove to be another sorely needed good night’s sleep. Please pray with us that all the frightening “bumps in the road” they said he likely would encounter during treatment will continue to be as small as the few we have so far faced.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2009 8:31 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #30

Day 1 of the actual Stem Cell Transplant is over and I'm glad to report was largely pretty uneventful. I did go home last night, got a good night's sleep and returned to the hospital at 8:30am this morning to be there for the Doctors Rounds and spend the day. When I arrived Chris's nurse report he had some nausea and had thrown up. He did have one very small bleed over his left eye. The nurse said she couldn't tell anything. He said "My wife will see that immediately". She was at his bed side when I got in and found out about the throwing up – took one look at him and said "You had a small bleed out over your eye from that didn't you??" The nurse just about fell out. She's now aware that there is almost nothing that I miss! LOL!

By the time I arrived they had given Chris some Ativan (anti anxiety) and Benadryl (to prevent any potential reaction to the preservative in the stem cells) to prep him for the transplant. The nurses said he was pretty upset and worried that I wouldn't get there in time for the transplant. He was having some pretty bad cramps in his legs which moved up to his back and he was mentally not doing too well. I think most of it was just anxiety about what might happen once they started the transplant. The best way I can describe what he was doing is to say he was behaving as if he had "restless leg syndrome" all over his body. A second wholping dose of Ativan and he woke up about 4:30 this afternoon! But the anxiety attack ended pretty quickly. ☺

The process of the stem cell infusion took about 20 minutes – roughly 5 minutes per bag. They hang them just like IV's and in they go. He really seemed to relax once he realized that there wasn't going to be any earth shaking reaction or major problems associated with the process. In all he has 20 bags of cells to receive – they are about the size of the palm of your hand. He got 5 today and will get 6 or 7 tomorrow and the rest on Friday.

They did report in Rounds that his kidneys are complaining a little about the Chemo on Monday. His creatinine has jumped to 1.8 from 1.2 when he was admitted on Monday. They say so long as his output remains good they aren't too concerned about that number and that it is to be expected – and will likely get worse after the infusion of stem cells is completed – at least for a time. They don't really expect his numbers to start to show too much improvement until about 3 ½ to 4 months after the transplant process. So they will be watching him carefully for the next three months plus.

They are also watching his fluid intake VERY carefully and comparing it with his fluid outgo VERY carefully as well as weighing him 2 times daily to keep very close tabs on any potential fluid build up. They have been administering Lasix periodically to make sure – as they say – he is a "dry" as possible during the transplant process. Fluid is not his friend so they are carefully monitoring that to be sure we don't end up with a build up that causes major problems.

They are also keeping him pretty well drugged up for the next couple of days as well as part of the transplant process. I'm not really sure why, but that's what they are doing. He may not be too coherent if you call anytime between now and the weekend. They have also said they expect the way he feels to tail off through the weekend and hopefully early next week he will begin to feel a bit better. Right now he's just VERY, VERY fatigued.

Other than that he has no pain or anything really bothering him – except perhaps the hospital food. It's not bad but I know it's going to get VERY old after three weeks of being in there. I'm pretty tired of it after just two days. :-\

I am again home tonight for what I hope will be another good night's sleep and will return to the hospital tomorrow for Transplant Day #2 which we are praying will continue to be as uneventful as Day 1.

Thank you all so much for your calls, cards, emails and prayers. They are so appreciated!



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2009 5:54 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #29a

Chris is now set up on Skype

www.skype.com

If you have a webcam on your computer you can set yourself up on Skype and talk to him via webcam – complete with video and everything free of charge.

His username is Chris Mims and you can search for him by email
cmims@farmersagent.com



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2009 2:21 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #29

This are going pretty well. I stayed at the hospital last night for what thankfully proved to be a rather uneventful evening. Chris is settled into his room and so far – things are going well. I stayed this morning long enough to be present for the morning rounds and have come home for the afternoon to take care of a few things hopefully get a good night's sleep in my own bed. The dogs were most pleased at my coming home!

It's a good thing I had planned to stay at the hospital last night because they didn't start his chemo until nearly 10pm. Ugh!

They plan to start Chris's actually transplant tomorrow and it will run through Friday. The doctors have repeatedly told us that the next week will likely be a pretty bumpy ride at best. Chris can have visitors, but for Wed-Fri he will be pretty heavily medicated and not feeling too well. He can get email – though because of some fluke with the hospital wireless system we can not respond to email from our laptops. We both have

Blackberry's so we can see and respond to email from them, but if our answers are a bit short you know why – the combination of tiny Blackberry keyboards and 50 year old eyes make for interesting adventures trying to respond to lengthy emails. If you want to try to visit, please see "Chris Update #28" for what you need to know.

As the next few days progress I'll get email updates out as soon as I can. Please feel free to call if you like or email if I'm not speedy enough for you. If things are crazy and I can't answer I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Thanks so much for your support, prayers, calls, emails and cards. You have no idea what a difference the technology makes when allowing us to be in near constant contact with our network of support. And it always seems that the email or call comes just when we needed it most.

You can reach Chris at cmims@farmersagent.com



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2009 2:13 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #28

Please forgive me if you got this a dozen times. There was some fluke with the wireless connection at the hospital and from what I could tell it wasn't sent. Chris Update #29 for today will follow shortly.

Trish

December 14th 11am

Well kids, here's the latest – We are checked into Methodist Hospital for the duration. We met with Dr. Carrum and Audrey Scholoff at 8am this morning to once again go over all the benefits, risks and details of the stem cell transplant process for Chris. He is admitted and we are awaiting the installation of his port and Chemo this afternoon with a drug called Melphalan.

Important Details:
Address for mail:
Methodist Hospital
6565 Fannin – Room M873
Houston, Tx 77030

Room Phone # 713-441-1536

Visiting Hours 9am to 9pm

No one under 14 or anyone who is sick or has sick people in their home. His blood counts will be at their lowest towards the end of the week through early next week so it is imperative that you be aware of your possible exposure to anyone sick if you plan to visit.

You will check in at the main desk at the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit and proceed through the glass doors, scrub and then through the second set of glass doors. Go left and down the hall past the main reception area and look for the signs showing room numbers. He's just across from the nurse's station so we will unfortunately have to keep the wild parties to a minimum.

I find it easiest to park in Garage #7 off of Fannin and John Freeman if you plan to come visit.

He can have food from the outside – but it must be cooked – no fresh fruit, or veggies – no flowers, plants or anything like that. He can have cookies, cakes, and all the chocolate he wants.

The plan is as follows:

Today – installation of his port and chemo – They really don't expect him to feel all that bad from that – some nausea, and maybe gastric upset. Also there can be issues with mouth sores so he has a bundle of special toothpaste, mouthwash, and even special body soap to use. They say the chemo they use is a “gift that keeps on giving” and he will actually have more issues from the chemo about the time he goes home than in the next day or two. The chemo transfusion will be about 15 to 20 minutes. There is a risk that it could cause issues with his heart rhythm, kidneys and lungs. So they will be monitoring him very closely.

Tomorrow – rest day – probably OK for visitors tomorrow.

Wed, Thur & Friday – the actual stem cell transplant process – this is a 3 to four hour process and he will be very closely monitored and on a lot of different meds to combat the side effects of the preservative in the stem cells collected last week. These days probably will not be good days for visitors – or if you do come by you may only get to visit with me. From what they say he will be pretty out of it for those days.

From Saturday on until he is released – around January 5th visitors are OK, but I would encourage you to call before coming just to make sure it's not a day he feels really crummy and doesn't want to see anyone.

Now for the bad stuff:

Because he is an Amyloid patient, this transplant process isn't as “easy peasy lemon squeezy” as it would be if he were a multiple myeloma patient. There is a risk that he may have heart and or kidney issues that could result in him being moved to ICU for a period of time. They have made no bones about the fact that this process for patients with his disease is ***not*** a cake walk and there is a likelihood of some significant bumps in

the road in the next three weeks. We have prayed together this morning that this process will be a “bump free” experience and he won’t have major life threatening issues during this process and will come out the other side with remission of his disease and be able to return to something resembling a normal life.

They have told us their fatality statistics for the process Chris will undergo with patients with his disease is in the 5% to 8% range. National statistics at other treatment centers they say are 10% to 15%. mortality rate for Amyloid patients undergoing stem cell transplantation.

We did discuss what other options are available to Chris. Basically he could continue on the Chemo regiment he has been on, but commonly with Amyloid patients you reach a point where those drugs become ineffective. There is always a possibility that at that point his condition may have deteriorated to the point he would no longer be eligible for a transplant process. So while this procedure isn’t without risk, it is also his best option for what we hope will be a long term remission of his disease.

I’ll send updates as often as I can during the process. Feel free to email me and Chris has his Blackberry and Computer at the hospital so you can email him too. His email is cmims@farmersagent.com

Thanks for your support, calls, hugs, cards and prayers. They have all really help sustain us during this journey.

From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, December 11, 2009 3:38 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Upddate #27

We have received a call from Methodist telling us that they are now planning to admit Chris on Monday morning at 8am. They had apparently a larger than expected # of white cells in the stem cell collection and they now want to admit him Monday, have his port inserted first thing and do his High Dose Chemo all in one day on Monday. They had planned to do the Chemo over two days. They will then rest one day – then do the actual transfusion of stem cells over three days instead of two. Apparently the preservative used to keep the stem cells from being damaged while frozen is very hard on the kidneys and they want to do the transplant over three days to try and reduce the load on Chris’s kidney’s.

From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2009 3:02 PM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #26

We have received confirmation that Chris is scheduled to enter the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit at Methodist Hospital on Tuesday, December 15, 2009 for his stem cell

transplant. If all goes according to plan we expect him to be released in approximately three weeks – or about January 5, 2010.

We have a pre-admission meeting on Monday morning at 10am.

I will put out an update with all the details on the schedule of the transplant process and when he should be able to accept visitors and other details.

You're prayers for him during this difficult treatment and me during his hospitalization are greatly appreciated.



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, December 07, 2009 7:16 PM

Subject: Chris Update #25

Hi All,

Time for another note to bring you up to date on our rapidly changing lives.

Over the weekend Chris too his Neupogen shots and really didn't have much trouble with them other than feeling a bit crummy – sort of like he had a cold or the flu. We arrived at the Medical Center at 8am this morning for his check and hopefully first harvest.

We did successfully harvest 1.5 million stem cells today. It wasn't that big a deal – four hours sitting in a chair with blood going out one arm, through a machine and back into another arm. If it hadn't been for the mining expedition they went on trying to set the first of the two IV's it would have been a completely boring piece of cake. Chris took his DVD's of the old Buck Rogers in the 25th Century to watch on his own private video while the process was going on. So he had some amusement during his confinement in the chair.

We will have to go back tomorrow because they want to have about 4 to 5 million stem cells in reserve before they progress with the transplant next week. If they collect another 1.5 million tomorrow that means we will likely be going back for a third harvest on Wednesday.

But we are thankful that he responded well to the Neupogen and didn't have to have any additional drug therapy to free his stem cells from his bone marrow.

We are still scheduled for him to be admitted on December 15th. I'll send another update shortly with all the details on visitation rules, locations, phone #'s etc. We are also considering hooking up with Skype for his hospitalization so he can talk to anyone via computer that has a webcam etc and wants to visit with him that way. Once we get that all set up I'll send an update on how to use it.

Thanks for all your thoughts and prayers. We feel so blessed and fortunate to have the amazing medical staff we have and the amazing friends and support group we have while going through this terrible ordeal.

From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, December 04, 2009 7:37 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #24

Well, I didn't really expect to have another update for you all until after our Dec 22 Drs appts. Houston is just full of BIG news today, not the least of which is that it snowed nearly all day!



Never did we expect to be making the trek to the Medical Center for an appointment in snow! But that's exactly what we did today. Based on the information we had thought we understood at our last appointments we expected to begin the process for Chris's Stem Cell harvest today and proceed with collection of the Stem Cells for a transplant at some later date. We fully expected that they would put Chris back on his Chemo and Steroid treatment for a while and try to get some further improvement in his condition.

We did start the process for the stem cell harvest this coming week. Chris has to take Neupogen shots two times daily over the weekend. The nurse practitioner who will be shepherding us through this process told us Chris should feel pretty lousy with bone pain and aches similar to flu by the end of the weekend. We are to watch for fever and any other unusual things like extreme weight gain of 5 lbs or more over night, etc. They did say the "flu like" aches just mean that the drug is working and we should have an excellent collection on Monday. We have to be back in the Med Center at 8am on Monday and we do hope that the collection process will begin then. We expect to be in the Med Center Monday, Tuesday and probably Wednesday for the collection process.

Much to our surprise today we were told that after review of all the tests done in the last week they have decided to go ahead with the full transplant process now. They told us today that they are planning to admit Chris for the transplant process on December 15, 2009 and went over the entire process and its risks with us again today. We were stunned to say the least! We expect him to enter the hospital on December 15th and be there for approximately 3 weeks. He expects to have his porta cath inserted and undergo some

high dose chemo on the 15th and 16th. A couple of days rest and then the transplant process will begin. They do have us scheduled for some pre-admitting meetings on Monday the 14th all day as well.

He will be in the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit on the 8th floor of Methodist Hospital for the process. He is allowed to have visitors so long as you are not sick and once we get verification that the transplant is a go I'll be letting you know about when visitors might be the most useful. As you can imagine I'll be trying to spread myself between the hospital, house and a sick husband in the hospital. Some visitors to keep his mind off things when I can't be there will be most welcome.

This procedure is not without risk, and they have discussed this with us twice already. They told us today there is a 10 to 15% chance he won't survive the process. There is some chance that he may end up in ICU for a period of time, and that he may end up on kidney dialysis for a period of time and possibly permanently. We certainly hope to have the process go smoothly without any dramatic episodes or major complications they have discussed. Once he is released from the hospital he will be house bound for 1 month and visiting the Med Center 3 times weekly for checks for the first three months. So it seems we will definitely be wearing out the pavement between our house and the Med Center.

He has been basically put on house arrest for the next couple of weeks to make sure he doesn't come in contact with anyone who is sick and get sick himself. That would derail the entire process. So we are planning to spend the next couple of weeks at home and just spend some time together and get rested up for the onslaught.

Your thoughts and prayers during this time are truly appreciated. This has been a long year – and without the support of our family and friends it would have been unbearable.

You can contact Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com and see his own version of what is going on at the Caring Bridge website listed below.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>



From: Christopher Mims [mailto:cmims@farmersagent.com]

Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2009 11:33 AM

Subject: Happy Thanksgiving

Dear Friends,

I wanted to take a moment to wish you a very Happy Thanksgiving. I am so thankful to have each of you as my friends. You are more than friends. You are family. Thank you so much for your love and support to Trish and I during this long year. We would not have made it without you. Every phone call, card, and hug means so much and breathes fresh life into us. I am grateful that God has brought each of you into our lives. Little did we know 30 years ago how much you would mean to us today. To our new friends, it has been a privilege to get to know you better through this time. Thank you as well for your love and affection. I know that we have lifelong friends in each of you

I am also thankful that God has healed me to the point that I could be a part of everything this fall. The way I felt this summer, I didn't think I would have been able to be with you this fall. Every tailgate party, every board meeting, and every football game has brought joy to my heart. I look forward to eating owl with you guys on Saturday and hopefully enjoying a championship game together.

Have a great Thanksgiving and may God Bless you as richly as you have blessed me.

Love to each of you,
Chris

Chris Mims



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2009 1:42 PM
To: Christopher Mims (cmims@farmersagent.com)
Subject: Chris Update #23

I do not know when or if Trish will get the strength to send a detailed update from our past week so I am sending a personal update. Most everything is still going well but we have hit one major snag for the transplant. Kidneys. They seem to be the only organ not healing but actually is getting worse. My protein counts have gone up from 5000 in April to 9000 now. Normal is below 100. We will not be able to proceed with the transplant with the Kidney in this condition. We will do the harvesting at the first December unless something else comes up. Then I will return to my regular chemo/steroid routine to keep the disease in check until the kidney's heal or burn out in which case I would then need a kidney transplant and a Stem Cell Transplant. There is also a risk that the chemo/steroids will eventually stop working in keeping the Amyloidosis in check at some point. The risks of doing the transplant while in this condition are far greater. I would most likely wind up on some kind of dialysis, could need a kidney transplant anyway, and my chances of survival to the transplant go down.

I don't know how often they can do the kidney tests. Typically they run this test every 6 months but I am sure they can run them more frequently as necessary. But needless to say, unless there is another miracle we are 3 to 6 months maybe a year before the transplant. All of our hopes to a normal 2010 have ended. We will try to make the most of everyday we have together while waiting and we still have faith that all will be well in

the end. It is just very hard having this sickness and waiting. Thanks for your support and friendship.

Chris



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2009 8:23 PM
To: Christopher Mims (cmims@farmersagent.com)
Subject: Chris Update #22

As promised – the update from today’s Doctor’s visit.

We met with Dr. George Carrum, Associate Professor, Medicine at the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit of Methodist Hospital

I’m going to give you only a Reader’s Digest Condensed because I’m exhausted and we were there for three hours. You would be reading for three hours if I tried to tell you everything they said.

Dr Carrum took a VERY complete medical history, discussed his case and went over the Stem Cell Transplant procedure. Here’s where we go from here...

Wednesday, Nov 18th we have an all day battery of tests including Echocardiogram, Chest XRay, Lung Study, and another Bone marrow biopsy. They also will be checking Chris’s veins to determine if they are OK to do the collection of stem cells or if he will require a central port to be installed. After these tests are completed and the result in the Transplant Team will review everything to make sure there is no reason Chris would not be a candidate for the procedure.

Assuming everything is OK, we are scheduled to start his preparatory treatments for Stem Cell Harvest on December 4th. This will involve four or five injections which will be done at home of a drug called Neupogen. He will then be checked at the Transplant Center and if his body has responded to the drug then the harvest process will begin. What they expect is four or five days of a dialysis like process taking about four or five hours a day to harvest at minimum of 3 million stem cells for the transplant procedure. Those collected cells will be stored frozen until he is ready for the transplant process.

We don’t know yet if they will go directly into the transplant process or if they will put him back on his Chemotherapy for another month or two to see if they can get any further improvement in the organs that have been messed up by the Amyloid – namely his heart and kidneys. They did say that since he has known involvement of three organ systems, heart, kidneys and gastrointestinal tract, that he is really a borderline candidate for the process. He does have in his favor the exceptional response he has had to the Chemotherapy treatments and the fact that his disease was diagnosed very quickly. Given that this is the only real option for any kind of long term remission of his Amyloidosis,

we are praying that they don't find anything that would rule out him being a candidate for the process.

If he does in end up transplant he will be hospitalized for about three weeks on the 8th floor of the Methodist Hospital in the Cell and Gene Therapy Unit. He will be allowed to have visitors so long as they are not sick. He will have a private room, with wifi and DVD player. He won't have to wear "hospital garb" and they have a laundry for you to do your clothes, and a fridge so you can even have food from home if you have something special you want. Once he is released from the hospital he will be "house bound" for the first month since his immune system will be seriously compromised for a while. They did say they don't want him having any direct contact with the dogs for the first month after his transplant. That should be a lot of fun. :-\ We'll figure something out. We may just put an exercise pen up in the living room and put Chris in it!

We did discuss the side effects and risks. Side effects are mostly from the Chemotherapy they give just prior to transplant to destroy his bone marrow and include vomiting, nausea etc. as well as hair falling out. They said it would grow back in three to six months – not to worry! ☺ We did discuss their experience with Amyloid patients. They do a lot of this procedure on Multiple Myeloma patients, but Amyloid patients are a different animal – although the diseases are cousins. They did say statistically there is about 10% chance of catastrophic or potentially fatal complications – mostly often heart related – and that their stats are on par with those of Mayo and Boston with regard to that kind of serious and potentially life threatening issue. This happens because of the amyloid deposits mucking up the organs so that they don't respond to the treatment like an organ not affected by Amyloid deposits would. This facility has done about 20 or so Stem Cell Transplants on Amyloid patients in the last 10 years – so not the volume of Boston or Mayo, but we feel comfortable with what they have to offer and it does give us the opportunity to be near home and our support system during this process. For comparative purposes Boston and Mayo do about 100 Stem Cell Transplants a year combined. So about 2 a week between the two facilities, as opposed to 2 to 3 a year which is what Methodist is current doing.

We are both comfortable with the options available to us at Methodist and feel like – for us – it will be the best option at this time.

One other note – I got a new laptop last week and had to redo my distribution list for these updates. If you find out that someone didn't get this that has been on the list in the past please forward this on and have them email me at phantomdach@earthlink.net so I can add them back. I thought I had gotten everyone on the new distribution list on the new computer but I've had some folks say they didn't get my last update – the first one sent from this machine.

Thank you all for your ongoing support during this adventure. We do so appreciate it, and it has made all the difference in our being able to keep our heads above water during this whole ordeal.

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com



From: Patricia Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, November 09, 2009 10:39 AM

Subject: Chris Update #21

Hi all,

We have just been informed – as in 10 minutes ago, that we have an appointment with the Transplant Team at Methodist Hospital on Wednesday at 2pm.

This is the beginning of the process for Chris to undergo a Stem Cell Transplant Procedure that is the best hope for putting his disease in long term remission.

We would appreciate your prayers during this time on Wednesday. There is no one more tired of the parade of white coated persons and feeling icky than Chris. This procedure will not be a walk in the park by any stretch of the imagination, but it is the only road to hopefully returning Chris to a state of normal health and life.

Thank you all for standing with us during these last few months. It's has been a wild ride to say the least. But God has been good and provided everything we have needed at the time we needed it up to this point. We have faith that these heaven sent provisions will continue through the transplant process.

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com and see his own updates and thoughts at his Caring Bridge website which is linked below.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Websites

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, October 26, 2009 10:36 AM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #20

Hey guys,

As promised an update with the results of last weeks blood workup. Chris's Free Light Chains are now 100% within normal tolerances. Dr Baker's office called this morning. Their comment to Chris was "There is NO SIGN OF AMYLOIDOSIS!" Needless to say we are elated! Chris is on the way to the Medical Center this morning in this monsoon to take his latest 24 hour urine collection to the Methodist lab for analysis. It will be a few days before we the results on that back, but I'd say based on the blood test results we should be expecting a call from Dr Baker's office telling us they have set us up for our first meeting with the transplant team.

Chris is doing pretty well. We did attend the UH Game this weekend – and he did pretty well being at the tailgate and game. We got stupid trying to keep him from walking too far around campus and I dropped him off at the School of Music about 1pm Saturday. He jumped out of the truck and just headed in like a normal healthy person. He didn't make it across the street before his BP tanked and he passed out on the curb. Thank God there was a police office right there and the paramedics were with him immediately. They called me on my cell and I was able to return from the Robertson Stadium Parking lot immediately. He banged up his face pretty badly – and he has a few cuts on his right hand and arm – and his right hand was pretty sore and swollen yesterday but he's doing OK this morning. That's what we get for being over confident with him feeling better! The paramedics were amazing and we got him patched up and he went on to the tailgate and game. If he keeps doing this people are really going to begin to think it's a battered husband situation! LOL!

Never a dull moment at the Mims house for sure!

I did want to pass on this great news to you all. We are thankful to God for seeing us through this horrible experience. We realize we have a long way to go, but we are so grateful for the healing that has already taken place in Chris's body. We so appreciate those of you who have been praying for us – and if you have any doubt – it has worked! Keep up the prayers because the transplant process is no cake walk – we have a long road ahead of us still – but the happy news this morning is he has responded to the treatment and the nasty proteins that were gumming up all the works are no longer being produced by his body!

Have a good Monday and if you are in the Houston area try not to drown!



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Wednesday, October 21, 2009 9:38 AM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #19

Hi Kids!

Time for another fun packed update from the Mims household. This one will be pretty short (given my penchant for writing novels), sweet and nearly all good news for a change with some amusing side notes thrown in for good measure.

We had our regular monthly marathon of Dr's visits yesterday and all reports are good. If we weren't insane already we probably wouldn't find this too amusing but we have long since reached and blown right by the point where some things you just have to laugh about. The Kidney Dr who requested another "24 Hour Urine Collection" only two weeks ago – for the sole purpose of determining how much protein Chris is still loosing in his urine – and thereby determining his forward progress in destroying the amyloid from his body and also his progress towards readiness for transplant - FORGOT to mark the ONE BOX on the lab orders that told the lab to run that ONE test. So we got answers to a bunch of extraneous and largely irrelevant fluff that we didn't really need to know but we did NOT get the ONE piece of information that we really DID need to know. GRRRRRRRRRRRR. Chris is going to have to redo that test – which isn't that big of a deal if you don't mind having to pee into a jug for a full 24 hours! Funny thing is this redo was ordered by the hematologist – Dr Baker – and there is a whole set of different instructions for this one that we had never been given before when doing this same test for the Renal Specialists. Makes me wonder sometimes..... But I've elected to disregard that concern and move on with a few of the other zillion things I need to apply my best time and energy to. ☺

Anyway, the bits and bobs of information we did get from the Renal Specialist – who didn't run the MOST IMPORTANT TEST - shows his kidneys are still stable with a Creatinine of 1.2 which

is about where it's been for the last few months. So still no kidney damage, and things in that department are rocking along well. We're going to take that as a victory for the home team and move on. ☺

On to the mastermind of this whole adventure – Dr. Baker – All is well there too. We arrived at her office to find a sign on the door that said “The Witch is IN”. I had to laugh – she is truly a woman after my own heart! They did draw more blood yesterday, and we will have those results back in a few days. Chris has been told he no longer has to do weekly blood draws because his counts have stayed very stable and within good ranges for the last few months. So his budding affair with Carmen at the Quest Lab on Fry Rd is coming to an end. She'll probably think it was something she said. LOL! He will only be required to see her monthly now. Dr Baker did prescribe another round of Revlimid and Dexemethesone so we will be soldiering on with the same medication regiment for the next month.

The really good news is also that – pending the results of the blood draws and new 24 hour urine collection she has ordered – she may be ready to refer him to the Transplant Team to begin that process. We should know more about that in the next week – and you will all be the first to know as soon as we get any new information. She did say that they may collect and store his stem cells and wait a bit for the actual transplant to give him a bit more time to recover, get stronger and clear more amyloid deposits from his body. But it does seem that we may be entering the transplant phase of Chris's treatment before too long. And that is REALLY great news because it means one step closer to potential remission!

Dr Baker did give me a gold star in our visit yesterday. By using a teaching hospital like Methodist in the medical center we also have the opportunity to see a new resident every month in Dr Baker's office. That gives us the opportunity to train up the next generation of Doctors on the rare disease of Amyloidosis – which is a responsibility we are happy to take on. Many of these newly minted Doctors may only see one amyloid patient - Chris - in their entire career and the opportunity we have to help them see the odd but pretty common symptoms that led to his diagnosis may save someone's life when these folks finally complete their residency and go into practice. But the point of this paragraph is that Dr Baker told the Resident yesterday that Chris's progress and the fact that he is doing SO well is largely due to the fact that he has ME has his advocate/caregiver. She told the Resident – She thinks about things and has great understanding of what is OK to try. Without her support he'd be in BIG, BIG trouble! I had to laugh! She and I see eye to eye on nearly everything. I'm not afraid to come with questions, and she's not afraid to have me challenge her and ask why something is the way it is – and she's VERY good at explaining things in terms my feeble brain seems to be able to absorb. I feel very fortunate that God led us to her to be the Five Star General of our Army of Doctors to get Chris well. I'm perfectly happy to be her Colonel in this battle– respecting her rank but not afraid to discuss strategy and ask questions if I have them!

I'm so glad to have basically short (relatively) and sweet GOOD NEWS report for everyone. It's been a long year and we have been so humbled by all of you who have helped us out in so many ways! You have surrounded us with God's love in skin with cards, emails, calls, meals, yard work, help at the house – so, so many different ways. Nearly all of it has done wonders to help me keep my sanity during this very trying 2009!

If things weren't going so well, I'd also not find this too amusing, but we had a great day yesterday – between Dr's appts we tried an experimental lunch at MI Luna Tapas Restaurant in the Village – near the Medical Center. I thought we were in BIG trouble at first – I knew that Tapas meant “small dishes” but there was A LOT of squid, octopus, and other weird stuff on the menu that didn't really appeal to me. We settled on a braised asparagus salad with raspberry vinaigrette which was WONDERFUL and an Oxtail dish, a delicious pork chop dish and a potato dish. We finished with a braised banana dessert that was very good indeed. A nice adventure that I have no doubt we will try again!

And just to keep us humble and remind us that we aren't out of the woods and Chris is still very sick – his disease played a joke on us yesterday afternoon. Chris walked out to get the garbage can when we got home. It had blown into the ditch in front of the house yesterday while we were gone. When he bent over to pick up the lid he passed out on the side of the road in front of the house. I've long since learned about how long it takes him to do things and it was taking too long for him to get back up the driveway so I went out to see what was going on. I found him coming back up the driveway like a drunken sailor and he told me what had happened. The message here is he may look pretty good and be feeling pretty good for the most part – but he's still got major issues and things can go south in a moment. Thankfully he wasn't hurt in the fall and did recover quickly as he usually does. This is the first time in over two months his old nemesis orthostatic hypotension has managed to get the best of him. We'll keep putting one foot in front of the other – and thank you all so much again for your support.

You can see Chris's own words on "what's up" at his Caring Bridge website – link below – and you can email him at cmims@farmeragent.com. We both love to hear from you guys. It always seems that someone decides to call or send an email or card just at the moment when one of us needed a bit of a pick me up.

Next Dr Appt marathon is November 17th, but I'm sure I'll have another update before then with the results of the tests run by Dr Baker yesterday.

Take care and God bless you all.



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2009 2:20 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #18

I know you all have been waiting for the report from yesterday's Dr's visit. Sorry – I just didn't have the juice to get it done last night.

Readers Digest Condensed Version: Test results show that we have made major headway in stopping the production of the Amyloid protein – his levels are nearly normal now. We will continue the same therapy we are doing now and wait for his body to start disposing of the build up protein that invaded his organs. We are looking for reduction of protein loss in urine, reduction of fluid retention issues and improved albumin levels as the markers for when we will be referred to the transplant team. No real time frame on when a transplant might take place.

Unabridged Version with Commentary: Chris's response to the treatment has been excellent despite some dark days in the last few months. His Light Chains protein levels are GREATLY improved – these are the proteins that are mucking up the works. Dr Baker is VERY happy because the protein production has been markedly decreased – and is almost at normal levels.

In April his Kappa levels (the good guys) were 1.57, Lambda levels (the bad guys) were 15.0 – Ratio 0.1

In June his Kappa levels were 1.57, Lambda levels were 26.8 – Ratio 0.06

In August his Kappa levels were 0.79, Lambda levels were 3.16 – Ratio 0.25

Normal Ranges are Kappa 0.33 – 1.94, Lambda 0.57-2.63 with a ratio of 0.26 to 1.65

So we are CLEARLY on the right track.

The Revlimid and Dexamethasone is doing its job, and we will continue with this treatment at the same levels we were at last month. We are now waiting to see the protein loss in his urine improve, his fluid retention levels improve and his albumin level go up. These will be the measures of how his body is doing with destruction and removal of the proteins built up in his organs.

We did find out that his heart pumping capacity is 50% - normal is 60%, so that's not too bad, but it is somewhat diminished. Dr Baker has encouraged Chris to try to go to some low level exercise classes and see how it goes. He needs to rebuild his strength as much as possible to be in the best shape possible for the transplant process. We do not have a time frame for that yet, and it all depends on how his body does with destruction of the protein build ups that have occurred over the last several months.

Dr Baker says the kidney's will improve first with destruction of built up protein, then the heart, then the nerves and associated low BP issues. Given that his main issues have been nerve related, this may take a while, but we again don't have a time frame. She did say that his Albumin levels had been on a steady decline for months and the tests this month shows a recovery from the 2.0 measured last month to the 2.6 measured this month. The normal range is 3.4 - 5.4 grams per deciliter (g/dL). So that is another indicator that we are moving in the right direction. She is VERY happy that the downward trend in Albumin levels seems to have turned the corner and hopes to see continued improvement in that regard next month.

Now for a lesson on Albumin, fluid retention, kidney function, hydrostatic pressure and a few other things you probably never really wanted to know. Kidneys are sieve. They normally retain some things and release fluid and toxins to be peed out of your body. Protein should stay in your body, not get peed out as Chris is currently having happen. The main protein Chris is losing in his urine is Albumin.

Albumin acts as a magnet to pull fluid out of your tissue so it can circulate through your organs and kidneys and end up with the stuff you don't need being removed by going out through your urine. Low Albumin levels will result in fluid retention in your tissues – such as Chris has been having troubles with for the last few months. Chris's Albumin going up means that he has more magnetic pull in his blood stream to remove fluid from his tissue and allow it to circulate, get the bad stuff cleaned out by his liver, kidneys etc and then be excreted out of his body. It also means that since the fluid will be less likely to be in the tissue and more likely to be in his blood veins where it belongs, he hopefully will have less and less issue with orthostatic hypotension – or passing out when he stands up. This is a VERY good thing!

My apologies to those engineers and others more intelligent than I on the distribution of this email – but I am going to make a feeble attempt to give a simple lesson as explained by the Doctor on what is happening mechanically in Chris's body right now –

Your heart pumps fluid down to your feet, but your body mainly depends on muscle action in your legs and veins to return that used blood to your heart. With low BP, and nerves in his veins affected by the protein deposits as well as low albumin levels resulting in fluid being in his tissues instead of his blood veins, Chris has had the hydrostatic pressure in the veins in his legs be too great making it difficult for his leg muscles and veins to overcome gravity, do their job, and return used blood to his heart – so he has had fluid collection issues in his legs and lower body for the last few weeks. Hydrostatic pressure – think of water pressure – as you go deeper in the ocean the pressure increases. Same deal - as you go further down the column of blood in the blood vessels in your legs the pressure increases which also results in fluid leaching into the tissue and causing swelling in feet and legs. Low BP and too much fluid leaching into the tissue, combined with nerves not functioning properly from protein deposits is resulting in that column of blood not being able to overcome gravity and get back up to Chris's heart. The result –more fluid retention, orthostatic hypotension, and a heart rate that is high all the time trying to compensate and force his blood around his body to supply his organs. The compression stockings are helping with this a

lot. They are basically mechanical blood pressure control. Good thing he's been willing to wear them so religiously! We do hope to see improvement in this ugly cycle soon!

We also found out that the main reason he ends up having to go to the restroom several times during the night is that when he lays down at night his body no longer has to try and overcome gravity to return blood to his heart, so the fluid that has collected in his tissue returns to his blood stream, and the stuff that needs to end up being filtered by his kidneys can do so much more efficiently. Translation – he's up several times a night peeing. Oh well – not sure you wanted to know that – but I have found the whole “mechanical” aspect of how our bodies work to be very interesting – I've learned a lot of stuff I never wanted to know in the last few months – most of it has been fascinating!

Enough of the medical junk – on to Thanks you's! Allyson Edwards and the Katy YMCA Casserole Patrol have done an amazing job with keeping us VERY well fed for the last few weeks. Ladies, I didn't have a clue how much help it would be to have a few meals provided here and there. It has taken such a huge load off me – and everything has been SO delicious! We can't thank you enough for your help in that regard.

Also, Jim Cordner has made another trip to help in the yard. We really appreciate that too – because my back has been acting up something awful for the last few weeks – me trying to do more than I should – and it has helped SO much to have someone do a few things around the house. Last weekend he cleaned my ceiling fans – all of which were developing mustaches – cleaned out and changed the batteries in all my smoke alarms, put some stuff in the attic for me, fixed a flag pole holder that had come loose from its mounting – and just generally was an all around good guy to come and be a surrogate “honey doer” for the day. Don't worry Jim, you are not off the hook – my list is growing again.

Jeff Foltz, good friend and neighbor down the street, has also filled in a time or two for minor emergencies – like a smoke alarm that decided to start “chirping”. He's helped us get minor things that need attention “now” under control since he's just down the street.

Our next round of Dr's visits are October 20th. We will see both the renal specialist and hematologist that day – so it will be an all day affair.

Specific prayers for this month would be for continued response of Chris's protein production, improvement in protein loss and improved albumin levels which will demonstrate that his body is disposing of the protein deposits that have build up over the last few months. We are praying for God to prepare the way for the transplant process.

Thank you all for your support, calls, cards, emails, thoughts and prayers. We couldn't have survived this without your help.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, September 04, 2009 5:38 PM
To: phantomdach@earthlink.net
Subject: Chris Update #17

We just received a phone call from Dr Baker's office – the hematologist that has been treating Chris with the results of the measurement tests they did at his visit on Tuesday.

Y'all sit down! Miracles DO happen!

Per the Doctors office Chris's "free light chains" which are the nasty little boogers that are mucking up the works have responded to the treatment and they are "nearly normal" at this point!

We give God the credit and glory for this wonderful result to begin the Labor Day weekend.

He will continue treatment for the next month – our next Hematologist visit is September 22 – and we should have some more news then.

I just had to share and thank you all for your support and prayers – THEY HAVE WORKED!

Have a wonderful and peaceful weekend!

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have. --Thomas Jefferson



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 01, 2009 7:24 PM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Subject: Chris Update #16

Today's was another round of Dr's visits and here is our most recent update as promised.

First let me say that to come home to delicious meals prepared by Laura Germann and Heidi & Oscar Southall really made a nice treat to the end of a very tiring day. These two wonderful families have provided us with yummy stuff to eat for the next couple of days – and ladies I REALLY appreciate this. I'm exhausted from the day's activities and to just warm up something wonderful, sit down and eat and have very minimal clean up afterwards was exactly what the Dr ordered for ME this afternoon!

Also, special thanks to Matt & Lisa Cushing for another Saturday in the yard helping out along with Josh Farris from our church. You guys are the greatest!

Now on to what you really want to hear about – What’s up with “El Jefe”.

At my last update we were having serious and significant issues with low blood pressure to the point of having blackouts and seizures. Dr Baker had discontinued Chris’s lasix thinking that it was taking too much fluid from his vascular system and exacerbating an already annoying problem. Apparently she was right! Between stopping the lasix and him being off all treatment for two weeks he’s nearly like new! He actually worked all week last week – mostly full days – and even drove himself to the office most days. I opted to take the week off with him doing so well and try to get caught up on some things around here and get a little R&R for myself. We know this won’t last, but why not enjoy it while you can! And I’m so far behind here if I live to be 100 I’ll still not have everything done. I’m having to learn to apply the “100 year test” to a lot of things. Ask yourself – In 100 years will anyone know I didn’t do this today?? If the answer is no, then it can probably wait. ;->

He did have some minor BP issues that made him uncomfortable to drive yesterday, so I took him to work. But he did manage to make it nearly all day and actually was marginally productive while there. I don’t think he layed down on the couch once! He was tired in the evenings for the last couple of weeks, but not exhausted to the point of collapse as he has been for the last few months.

Today’s Doctors visits yielded some pretty good results. The Renal specialist says his Creatinine is still 1.1 which is actually within normal tolerances and indicates that his kidney function is stable. He has had few if any gastric issues of any kind for the last couple of weeks so that is also good news. He’s lost a bit more weight, but according to the Renal Specialist that is likely mostly a loss of muscle mass. He is still loosing a similar amount of protein through his urine, and because of that imbalance he is not really able to absorb and use nutrients too well – hence the continued muscle wasting. She did not recommend any dietary restrictions, but encouraged him to eat a variety of healthy foods. Give her view that his condition with regard to kidney function is pretty stable right now she didn’t want to see him again for two months. They will do blood work in one month, along with a “24 hour urine collection” which they will use to get a very accurate count on the exact amount of protein that is being lost compared to what it was the last time it was measured. This count, along with his albumin –which is still very low at 2.0 and continuing to decline – are two of the main measures of his response to treatment. So we hope and pray that these numbers will begin to show some improvement. But the really good news at the Renal Specialist at this point is that there is still no sign of loss of kidney function and for that we are very thankful to God.

Dr Baker – the hematologist – was very pleased with his overall condition and mental state today. We told her we had discontinued the drug Reglan that he had been on to help with the function of his intestinal tract. The side effects of that drug are frightening and basically read like a description of Chris. Those included confusion, sweating, depressed mood, anxiety, etc. including muscle tremors. We decided to take a few days off that drug and see what happened. Within 48 hours he was like a new man. And he is having no issues with is intestinal function without the drug so we just stopped it and informed Dr Baker. She agreed we had done the right thing – especially given the results that we saw. She was VERY, VERY happy with his mental state at today’s visit. We had a young Resident come in and interview us before Dr Baker came in. He went out and told her that Chris looked GREAT based on her previous notes. She even told us during our visit with her that she had thought “Yeah right – it’s your first day on the job – what the heck to you know” – And she herself admitted she was amazed. So no more Reglan and good riddance I say!

We also seem to have a “cocktail” of drugs that are working pretty well to manage his low BP as well. With him no longer allowed to take Lasix to help deal with fluid retention, Dr Baker has said you have two choices – live with the fluid retention and feel like the Michelin Man for a few days or pass out every time you stand up. He’s opted for the Michelin Man choice – and rightfully so I think. So long as he has no difficulty breathing or chest pains he’s just going to have to learn to

live with that icky bloated feeling. Given that he's also wearing heavy compression stockings to help with the low BP he's really getting a great idea of what it's like to be female. ☺ I expect MUCH more sympathy to all his lady friends in the future after this ordeal!

As for his treatment – he is resuming his Chemotherapy tonight right where he left off. His steroid treatments will return to 40mg of Dexamethasone once a week for this cycle. She did draw blood to check “free light chains” which are the icky proteins that are causing all the trouble. We should know the results of those tests by the end of the week or early next week. They are fancy tests and take a while to get results back on sometimes. Once those results are back we will have a bit more information about what we might expect in the next few weeks/months with regard to any further treatment,

With the resuming of his chemo, he will resume weekly blood work and we will again have to watch for possible issues with blood clots and fluid retention. We hope and pray that it will be as it was before – minimal side effects and that the “Blood Pressure management cocktail” will continue to work well so he doesn't have low BP issues that become debilitating as they had before. If things keep going as they are he might even make a few UH Cougar Football games this fall!

Thanks for all the prayers, cards, calls, and emails y'all. We really appreciate your support during this time. It's been amazing how God has rallied so many people around us to give us all kinds of support during this very difficult time.

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com and see his own words about what is going on at his Caring Bridge website – the link is below.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have. --Thomas Jefferson



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, August 21, 2009 6:00 PM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'

Subject: Chris Update #15

We had a visit with Cardiologist Dr Daphne Coulter today. Dr. Baker (Hematologist) had requested this because of the recent black out incidents and greatly exaggerated low BP issues that Chris has been experiencing for the last couple of weeks.

She did a thorough review of his history and all the events leading up to where we are today. She is 100% sure that difficulty Chris is having with Orthostatic Hypotension is a result of “floppy veins” (her technical term) and those are related to his amyloidosis as we had previously been told. She did say that his heart is compensating well for the dilation of his veins. She also said that his excellent performance on his stress test last November was a result of “conditioning” and

she gave great praise to the exercise program and the effectiveness of it up to the point where he could no longer participate. She did say that the excellent work he had been doing in exercise class would serve him well for months to come in the process of his treatment and recovery. She gave a very clear and engineer like explanation of pressure gradients and pump strength etc. drawing a wonderful picture of what is going on with Chris's heart and circulatory system at the moment. I had to laugh because to me it made the whole problem so clear!

She also said that the recent development of some fluid retention around Chris's mid section is a result of the protein he is losing in his urine. Apparently your blood and vessels have "all kinds of junk" (more technical jargon) in them that help you to keep a proper fluid volume in your circulatory system – and that property volume has everything to do with your bodies ability to maintain appropriate blood pressure. The protein he is losing is part of that "junk" and as such the fluid in his body is tending to collect in his tissue rather than reside in his circulatory system where it should be. This is also having a negative effect on his BP.

She did say that the Steroids/Lasix combo that he has been on is not going to work because it – as Dr. Baker told us – is removing too much fluid from his circulatory system and exacerbating the already low BP. She also said that while he does have some thickening in the lower left chamber of his heart, the increased heart rate is just the hearts way of coping with the low BP – there may be the right amount of fluid in his system – but his veins being dilated means there is a larger area that same fluid needs to be moved through – hence in order to keep the right amount of fluid where it needs to be his heart has to pump faster. She didn't seem concerned at all about that at this time.

At this point she says his heart sounds fine – but Amyloid can cause "stiffening" of the heart muscle which results in the heart being unable to supply the body properly with blood. At this point, based on Echocardiogram and his other previously performed tests she doesn't think that this is an issue. She also said that the rise in his BNP # - which is the # that tells how hard your heart is working was of no concern. She said that unless he began having shortness of breath or chest pains she had no concern about a BNP in the 200 range – the top of the normal range is 100. She was also unconcerned about him being off Lipitor and his cholesterol #'s soaring pretty high. She says he has no artery disease and this isn't a concern as it should be a short term blip in his measurements. Once the protein loss from the kidney's is stopped, the cholesterol will return to normal levels.

She did prescribe a second medication to help with the low BP – Florinef. It is designed to encourage salt and fluid to stay in the system and thereby support low BP. He is to take this medication for a couple of days after his steroid treatments and then stop it. She instructed us to monitor his response, and adjust the dosage as needed. She also noted that his other BP med – Midodrine – will tend to drive up heart rate so she feels that this medication may be some of what is causing his heart rate to trend a bit higher than we thought was good.

She told him the best things he can do are 1) Wear his compression stockings (which he does religiously – despite them being hot and uncomfortable), 2) Stand up slowly (which he is getting pretty good at) 3) NOT to stand in lines – or "stand" for extended periods. Walking is OK – but standing encourages the blood to pool in your legs – when you walk the muscle contract and put mechanical pressure on the veins in your legs – so walking is good. She also said he could do swimming or water aerobics if he had them available to him.

She does not want to see us again unless we have issues – chest pain or shortness of breath.

She also had a message for Dr. Baker – "GET ON WITH IT KELTY!!!!!!!!!!" " She wants Chris back on his treatment and pursuing Stem Cell Transplant as fast as we possibly can before the disease does any further damage to his body! I must say I LIKE her way of thinking!!!!

I'd like to also say we feel so fortunate and blessed – and it is AMAZING what a difference a few days can make. Nearly all of last week and the first half of this week Chris was all be bed bound. We ended up purchasing a transport chair to get him around. If he got up he would pass out. We had no choice but to set up a line of chairs leading to the bathroom because he couldn't walk from his chair or the bed to the bathroom without becoming very dizzy and passing out. I've had to help him shower and dress – because even warm water in the shower resulted in his blood vessels dilating and him becoming dizzy. It has been a very challenging 10 days or so.

He's about three or four days off his steroids – and will remain off until our Sept 1 appts – and today he's like a new man! He can walk around – he even walked into the Dr's office today from the parking garage – and it was quite a hike. We hope that this weekend and next week are good days for him – we both could use it! This disease is such a roller coaster. As I've said before the up hills are grueling and torturous – the down hills are a wild, horrific ride. And we are both tired of the roller coaster at this moment!

We are happy with the results of today's visit and feel certain that God has cleared the way for Chris to resume treatment at our September 1, 2009 meeting with Dr. Baker.

I'll send a new update after the Sept 1 round of appointments.

As always, thank you all for your support and help. We couldn't have made it without you!

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have. --Thomas Jefferson



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Sunday, August 16, 2009 10:39 PM

To:

Subject: Chris Update #14

Hello one and all. Sorry to be some far between updates with my last sent on July 28th. It has been a wild ride.

Dr Baker warned us that we might not like her too much after this cycle of medication. So far I think she may have been right on that call! She changed Chris's steroid regimen from 40mg Dexemethesone once weekly to 20mg once a day for four days then four days off – repeated three times followed by two weeks off. The four days on haven't been so bad. Chris has felt pretty good, although tires very quickly, and even was able to cook breakfast yesterday and today. The four days off... Well – more on that later.

I've taken over most of the cooking at our house mostly because it's just too much for him to do. But also because he wasn't managing the snacks and small meals he'd been ordered to do too

well. If he's going to work I make his lunch and two snacks and he's not allowed to come home with anything left. If he's at home I leave the same in the fridge. I've told him I don't care what he does with it so long as there is nothing left when I get home. If he feeds it to the dog that's his business! So far he swears he's eaten everything I've given him with the one exception of celery with peanut butter. I've been trying to make sure he gets a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables – and include some things he normally doesn't eat. He's also been gracious enough to say that most of what I've prepared has been pretty good. His gastro issues are much improved – so things are going along pretty well in that regard. More on that later too.

What I can say is on this medication regimen the four days he's been off meds can best be described as hell. The days he's been off have mostly been characterized by extreme difficulty with his orthostatic hypotension – translate – his BP tanks really, seriously and dangerously low when he goes from sitting to standing. The first weekend he was “off” he blacked out coming back from the bathroom and fell hitting the wall in our bedroom with his head and shoulder hard enough to leave a divot in the sheetrock. He had a sore neck and shoulder from that for a few days. He has had numerous occasions where he couldn't respond verbally, reported “gray outs” in vision, and froze several times causing me to have to either catch him falling or try to guide him to a chair before he completely blacked out. We've had to do some creative management of these issues because if I screw up my back trying to catch him or break his fall we will be in big, big trouble!

This past week was the worst of the worst. On Monday he had extreme difficulty even walking to the bathroom without having to stop and sit several times – or black out and collapse. On Monday morning just after he got up he blacked out and had a mild seizure from low BP. Fortunately he was near the bed and I was able to wedge his body between me and the side of the bed and break his fall. He ended up flat on his back on the floor – stiff – unresponsive, eyes rolled back and lip bitten between his teeth. Needless to say it scared the living daylights out of me. If I hadn't had so much experience years ago with rescue dachshunds that were epileptic and knew what a seizure looked like I probably would have completely flipped out. He came to in just a few seconds and the first thing out of his mouth was “What am I doing in the floor??” He had two more less severe episodes like that Monday and one additional seizure like event where he woke up in the floor. This kind of thing continued all week unless we were VERY careful to make sure he got up slowly and took only a few steps at a time before sitting back down. The entire problem resolved within a few hours of him restarting his steroids on Thursday morning – Thank God!

Our friend Jan Foltz as well as his mother sat with him most of the week so I could go to the office. Given the fact that he couldn't make the trip to the restroom it was really impossible for him to be at the office even if I drove him there. We rigged a row of chairs every six or eight feet apart from his recliner to the bathroom so that he could go a few steps and sit down to get to the bathroom. We did talk to the Doctor on Monday and they called back with their recommendations on Tuesday. They had given him Lasix to combat the 10+ pounds of fluid he normally gains being on the steroids. They believe that the Lasix is washing out fluid from his vascular system much more quickly than it is removing the fluid from his tissue resulting in what is already low BP becoming so dangerously low he is passing out. The seizure like events he had are called “Syncope”. You can read more about it here - <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4749>

As a result of these blacking out events, Dr. Baker has done two things – one he's been told that he can not take anymore Lasix and he's just going to have to deal with the fluid retention. We have been told to notify her office immediately if he has difficulty breathing or develops any tightness in his chest. The fluid should resolve on its own more slowly, and hopefully it won't cause so many BP problems without the drug intervention.

Secondly, she has requested that he see another cardiologist to be sure that there isn't anything going on with his heart that might be causing these events. We are about 99% sure there isn't but for her that's not good enough! Dr. Baker's office called on Tuesday to give us the name and

phone # of the Cardiologist they wanted us to see. I called the next day to make the appointment and was told that the first available was September 24th. OK, fine – if that's all you have, that's all you have. I made the appointment and called to let Dr Baker's office know that the appointment had been made as requested and if that date wasn't soon enough for them they needed to call the cardiologist and fix it. About two hours later I received a call that his appointment was now Friday, August 21st at 10am. It's truly amazing what happens when one Dr's office talks to another instead of dealing with the appointment desk!

As mentioned before – stomach issues are coming along much better – and are one of the brighter spots in this report. We did see the gastroenterologist on August 14th and he was very pleased with Chris's progress. So pleased in fact he doesn't want to see Chris again until after the first of the year unless he develops issues that require his attention. We've had very little nausea and vomiting and no issues with either lack of or excessive "motility". Food is tasting pretty normal to Chris and he's able to eat pretty much what he wants – so long as the portions aren't too large. He's having to learn to eat frequent small meals and/or snacks. He's doing pretty well with that so long as I pack his meals/snacks for the day. The gastro Dr did give him an over the counter product called Align. It's a probiotic. So far it's helped a lot with the feeling he often has that food is just sitting in his stomach after meals. He felt good enough to try Mexican food for the first time in months this afternoon. We accompanied friends Jeff and Jan Foltz to see Julie/Julia and then went to eat. So far so good! The Mexican food isn't revolting and trying to make an escape! And I feel pretty certain there has to be some curative quality in chips and hot sauce. I do recommend the movie by the way – it was very amusing!

One other development in the last couple of weeks is we have taken him off the drug Reglan that he was taking to stimulate function in his intestines. The side effects of that drug are just crazy. Two weeks ago Chris's mental state was so bad it was frightening me. He was saying things like "you'd be better off if I died", crying a lot again, and just generally in the dumps. He also had developed Parkinson's like tremors in his hands. After reviewing the list of side effects as well as the counsel given to us by the pharmacist regarding some reported adverse interaction between Reglan and the anti-depressant he was on, we decided to stop the Reglan and see what happened. We had already been given instructions from the Gastroenterologist to play with the dosage on that drug and watch for things like tremors. So we stopped it for a couple of days. I told him that he needed to speak up immediately if his bowels didn't move so that we could restart the drug to prevent possible obstruction. Within less than two days the tremors were all but gone and his mental state was 180% - really better than it's been in months. It became clear that this particular drug and Chris didn't agree! At our visit with the Gastro Dr he told us not to take the Reglan again and that we did right to stop it – that continued use once those tremors begin can cause them to become permanent! I was glad that I had spent the time necessary to be clear on the side effects of all the drugs he's taking when the Dr told us that. Score another one for the wife! ☺

Our next round of Dr's appts with the "big guns" – the Hematologist and Nephrologist – are September 1. They are going to rerun all the necessary tests to determine if there has been any response to the treatments he has undergone so far. We do not know at this point if they will restart his chemotherapy at that time – or if some other course of treatment may be considered. We'll just have to wait and see.

We are entering the first two week period with no steroids. We are hoping that without the Lasix to flush the built up fluid out of his system he won't suffer from such severe low BP and that the next two weeks will hold some nice days that he can feel good and enjoy. Given that his cardiologist appointment is Friday and he will have been off steroids for a week at that point it could be an interesting trip to the medical center if the low BP returns as bad as it was this last week. We'll just have to deal with that if it comes!

Thanks so much for all your calls, emails, cards, prayers and visits. It really helps Chris not feel so isolated. We

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com. You can also see updates in his own words at his Caring Bridge website – the link is posted below.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have. --Thomas Jefferson



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2009 9:26 AM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'

Subject: Chris Update #13

Lucky #13! Sorry it's been a couple of weeks since my last missive. Life has been a bit crazy.

We had our regular Dr's visit yesterday with Dr Baker, our hematologist. Chris will not resume chemotherapy treatments until after our next visit on August 31st. He has an appointment with his neurologist on August 4th and Dr Baker feels that the delay our next regular visit with her on August 31st will give Dr Churches sufficient time to do any tests he wants and those results to all be cycled back through the system and given to her for review and response.

Dr Baker said she is a bit surprised at the fight the Amyloid is putting up and somewhat frustrated at the lack of progress. When we first visited her in April Chris was able to work most days, and still attending exercise class and able to do some light yard work. Since the first of April his condition has really been one of steady decline. He's having almost constant issues with orthostatic hypotension despite wearing compression stockings and taking medication to help keep his blood pressure up. Even with the compression stockings he's had several instances in the last few days where he has nearly blacked out and I've had to rescue him from wherever he was and get him to a chair to let it pass. He is also once again having stomach issues and for the last several days has had a very difficult time keeping much food down for any length of time at all. He's lost an additional 13 pounds in the last month and now is down a total of about 60 pounds since last November. He's also having a horrible time with the mental/emotional aspects of the "steroid roller coaster" that he goes through. He's up for three or four days after taking them, and then crashes badly until the next steroid dosage. None of this is at all what Dr Baker had hoped for.

What she has done for this month is to rearrange his ongoing steroid treatment. She did say that steroids are very effective platelet killers and before the development of the chemo drugs he has taken its all they had to work with for Amyloidosis. She is having him increase his steroid dosage to 20mg Dexemethesone four days, then four days off for three cycles, then two weeks off. The two week off period will end on August 31st – the day of our next round of Dr's appts. We realize that this new dosage will still have side effects, but currently he is taking 40mg Dex once weekly. He's doing sort of OK for three to four days after that and being nearly bed ridden – or at least recliner ridden - until the next dosage. Hopefully with the longer dosage – 20mg each day for four days then four days off - he will have fewer "crash" days. It seems he can eat better, has less BP issues, and generally feels better after those steroid dosages. The Dr said its like Crack – you

feel great when you are on it, and really awful when you are off. I said "MORE CRACK PLEASE!!" He's a real mess!

She also said that prior to his next appointment she was going to redo tests that measure progress from his treatment – blood tests for free light chains in his blood and albumin – and if there still is no response she feels it might be time to have him visit one of the research hospitals that specializes in Amyloidosis. She prefers Mayo Clinic which is located in Rochester Minnesota. I just hope we end up visiting there before it gets to be real winter! We don't do cold so well! And certainly not Minnesota kind of cold. BRRRRR!

On some other notes, I've been learning something about cooking and for the last couple of weeks have taken over the cooking chores from Chris. He's just not able to stand in the kitchen for any length of time. I do not think there is any connection between Chris having to eat my cooking and his recent weight loss or difficult keeping food down. ☺ He's actually been kind enough to say some of what I've made was pretty good so those that know me and my cooking skills can stop laughing!

Anyway, we're plugging along doing the best we can with what we have to work with at the moment. We have had so many people help us and be so kind to us and for that we are so grateful. Our church, Grace United Methodist sent a group out to do yard work last Sunday morning. They have an annual program called "The Church has Left the Building" were they send groups out to do things in the community one Sunday morning instead of doing Church. We ended up as one of the projects and we are so grateful to the families that came to help us and get things all sparkling in the yard again. Everything looks great! Our churches website is www.whatisgrace.org if you are interested in knowing more about this great family of Christians who put feet and flesh on God's love.

Thanks as always to those who have visited, called, emailed, and sent cards. One of the most difficult parts of this whole process for Chris has been that his disease is very rare. If he has something anyone had ever heard of he could talk to others and say this is what I'm experiencing – is that normal? Since his disease is not something many doctors have ever even seen, he sometimes feels isolated and very alone. It really helps him to know that he's not forgotten and that there are people out there who are concerned about his recovery.

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagency.com or you can see his own updates from his perspective at

Chris's Caring Bridge Website: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

Until next time,

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2009 6:28 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #12

Well, this has been a roller coaster of a week. Things seemed to start off OK, and we had hoped to make an overnight trip to Dallas to attend a meeting of the only Amyloidosis Support Group in the area. They were having one of the top research Doctors in the field to make a presentation and we thought it would be good for Chris to see and meet others in his same boat.

Attending that meeting was apparently not in God's plans for us because Chris had an episode while out running errands on Thursday. The way he described it he "forgot how to write". He was out running errands for the office, and stopped to purchase stamps. When he began to write the check he couldn't figure out which line to use, nor could he force his hand to correctly make the letters he needed to make to complete the check. The incident only lasted a few seconds, but it was scary. He did recover and was able to correctly complete a check and get the stamps and safely return to the office. When he told me about the incident, I suggested a call to the Dr was in order. One of the serious side effects of his chemo drug is DVT and blood clot issues. While this incident only lasted a few seconds, he did say the sensation was nothing like the issues he's continuing to have with extremely low blood pressure. Based on that I felt it was something that the Dr needed to know about – and they agreed with me when he called.

He called the Dr on Thursday afternoon and the Nurse Practitioner did call back to discuss the incident. They called again Friday morning at about 7:45am to tell us to get him to the Medical Center for a battery of tests and discontinue his chemo until further notice. We had another lovely day in the Medical Center redoing his echocardiogram, a getting a Doppler of his carotid arteries, and an MRI of his brain. They are looking for blockages and/or evidence of a clot or stroke. After completion of those tests we met with the Nurse Practitioner in the Drs office briefly. They are very concerned and suspect that he may have had a medication induced TIA <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4781> or Transient Ischemic Attack – basically a mini stroke that does not cause any damage.

He is off his chemo until the test results are back. We expect those results to be back early this week. We don't know but suspect he may be off his chemo for this cycle and not resume again until our next scheduled visit on July 27th. This is what that Nurse Practitioner expected the instructions would be after the Dr reviewed all the test results. This isn't the direction he wanted to be going and the delay is not having a positive mental impact on him at all. Hopefully we will get good news early this week and he will be able to resume treatment.

Chris is also once again having more severe issues with orthopedic hypotension – His blood pressure is dropping to levels that cause him to be dizzy and disoriented when he goes from a sitting to a standing position. He got up to go to the restroom on Friday night at about 3:30am and fell in the bathroom after not allowing enough time for his BP to normalize when he got up. The result is a bruised nose and cut chin. I promise, I was asleep in the recliner because I've been coughing too much at night and keeping him awake. I had NOTHING to do with his latest facial injury! Again though, these aren't the kind of things that have a positive impact on him mentally.

The Dr has prescribed Mitadrine to help raise his blood pressure and also has given him a script for compression stockings. He's not wild about that idea, but if the option is passing out every time he gets up, he may have no choice. He's already saying he may not elect to wear those. We'll see. I can be pretty persuasive.

Special thanks to Rusty and Dusty Hess for coming out Friday evening and helping me with the yard work. Chris is just not able to do much around here and I'm getting run pretty ragged trying to keep up with everything. After being sick with a cold a week ago, and still at the coughing all night stage, I can tell you really welcomed the help with getting the mowing and weed eating done. Thanks guys! You are the greatest!

We ask that you pray specifically for positive test results and that Chris is able to resume his treatment early this week. This disease isn't something to fool around with, and weeks without treatment aren't something we really want to have happen. Also, I specifically ask you to pray for

Chris to be strong and have a positive frame of mind. This whole experience is really making him feel very defeated and like he will never be well again. He desperately needs to have a more upbeat mental state to help him with the healing process. Those who know me know I'm not always the best person to be sympathetic. I'm more of a "boot in the backside" type. Perhaps he needs a boot, but I'm trying hard to make sure if I apply one its soft leather instead of my Red Wing Steel toe!

Thank you all for your calls, cards and emails. We so appreciate them. They help Chris and me both to no feel so isolated and out of the loop of life!



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2009 8:14 PM
To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'
Subject: FW: Chris Update #11

Hey All,

We had our monthly round of Dr's appointments today with all good news.

First let me say that a few things are going reasonable well. Chris isn't having nearly the problems he had been having from the symptoms of low blood pressure. He has had a few spells of light headedness here and there, but by and large he's learning to manage that very well. He just has to be careful and get up slowly, use caution or avoid bending over all together, etc. Also, he is having FAR less problems with nausea and he hasn't thrown up in several weeks now. He says food tastes better and his appetite is improved. He does still have ongoing fatigue issues, especially late in the afternoon and evenings. When it's time for him to stop, he has to, or he ends up feeling really bad.

He is still having some ongoing "gastric motility" issues. We are going to be trying some different things in diet etc, to try and manage that for the remainder of the course of his treatment. The Dr's are positive that these ongoing issues are a result of the Amyloid protein deposits affecting the nerves in his intestines and preventing them from functioning normally. That same problem may be causing some of the medications he is taking not be able to function as effectively as they might ordinarily. It's just going to be a management issue until he is healthy again. This is very similar to what is happening in his circulatory system, with the nerves in his blood vessels not being able to cause his blood vessels to expand and contract as they need to in order to control his BP when he goes from a sitting to a standing position, bends over, gets up from bed, etc.

At the Renal Specialist, the report is that his cholesterol is continuing to improve – down to 23 from a high of 365 two months ago, with further reduction in LDL and improvement in HDL. Also his Creatinine which is the measure of whether or not he is having kidney damage remains at 1.2. Normal is up to 1.0, but since his reading has remained constant they are very happy with this measurement of that particular function and do not feel at this point that there is any kidney damage at all. The Renal Specialists don't want to see him for two months now, so our regular monthly check up day in July will be truncated and include one less Doctor. YEAH!

Dr. Baker, Chris's Hematologist says things are looking very good. She said his blood work is about the best she has seen in a very long time at his stage of treatment. They did draw blood at this visit to recheck the light chain protein in his blood as well as BNP and Triponen which will let us know if his heart is still OK, and Albumin which will tell us if his liver is still functioning properly.

The measure of the progress of his treatment will be in these numbers. She told us that they are ultimately looking for a 50% reduction in Lambda Light Chain Protein in his blood stream –

these are the proteins that are causing the problems. She doesn't expect to see that much of a reduction at this point, but she does hope that the results will show improvement based on the anecdotal evidence of his improved appetite, taste of food, etc.

Given his good response during this last treatment to his Chemo Drug, she is again increasing his dosage for this next treatment from 15mg to 20mg. He started at 10mg. She is very happy with his response and tolerance for the drug and had nothing but good things to say at this visit. She did say that after the fourth treatment they will recheck the Light Chain Protein and other numbers again and then consider recommendation to the Stem Cell Transplant Team for evaluation and potential initiation of that process. If things go well, that would put mean he very possibly could be beginning the stem cell transplant process in September. Please keep us in your prayers that this would work out. It would mean the world to Chris to see an end to this illness – and that is what the transplant signals – the beginning of the end – assuming he responds well.

Chris has been having some pretty debilitating emotional issues surrounding the treatment and his illness in general. Some of this has been exacerbated by the high dosage of steroids he is taking as part of his ongoing therapy. Dr. Baker did prescribe an anti-depressant for him today. After we discussed with her the severity of his emotional disturbance she felt that what he is experiencing is something that medication will be required to help manage. He does feel better knowing that some of what he is experiencing is related to his drug therapy, but some of it is also likely real, clinical depression related to the stress of going through something like this. Hopefully this new medication will help him to even out some of his mood extremes and also help with some clarity of thinking. He's really been struggling with "brain fog" particularly in the afternoon when he starts to get tired.

Special thanks to our long time friend and hair dresser Rhonda Owen for coming Saturday morning and helping with the yard work. We SO appreciate that!

Thank you all for you continued calls, letters, emails, prayers and visits. It really helps Chris not to feel so isolated. You can contact him directly at cmims@farmersagent.com or you can check his Caring Bridge website for his own blog about his experiences and feelings. There is a link to that site at the bottom of this email.

We appreciate all of you continuing to pray for his ongoing improvement, and ultimate healing from this illness.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, June 22, 2009 6:31 AM

To: cmims@farmersagent.com

Subject: Chris Update #10

It's been almost two weeks since I've published an update. Things are going along pretty well for the time being. Chris has seen no real new side effects from the increased dosage of his chemotherapy drug which has resulted in a reasonably uneventful week. For that we are very

grateful. He did have a bout of very low BP on Monday of last week and I ended up having to drive him to his weekly blood work appt and to the office. He was in NO condition to be behind the wheel of a vehicle. He still has some "motility" issues - one extreme or the other it seems. But he is saying that food tastes better and he hasn't taken a nausea pill in well over a week. Another blessing for which we are very grateful. Also his weekly blood work for the last two weeks has been "perfect" according to the Dr's office – Yet another blessing for which we are very grateful.

We did have a visit with the Stomach Doctor on June 16th. They took him off the industrial strength stomach medicine he'd been on and put him on Nexium. It seems to be working pretty well and lacks some of the less pleasant side effects of the other drug. So that is yet another real blessing.

He does have limited energy, and when its time to stop, its time to stop. But he commented this weekend that he felt "almost normal" for short periods.

He is going to go to a Tai Chi class which we hope will help him build some strength and give him some exercise he can do. He's found that all the spinning moves in his regular aerobics class are just too much for him and he gets dizzy so quickly he can't participate in much of the class. That is a source of frustration and disappointment to him, but his absence will be only temporary I'm sure. Several of the ladies from his class visited the office last week and that really did a lot to lift his spirits.

Many have asked what they can do to help. Right now, aside from normal tasks of yard work and house cleaning, there's not too much that we can't handle. We do know at some point – hopefully this fall sometime – he will enter the hospital for a stem cell transplant (bone marrow transplant). It will be an analogous stem cell transplant which means they will harvest his own stem cells, after a round of chemotherapy and re-implant those after more chemotherapy. He will be hospitalized for several weeks – hopefully less than a month but we won't know until the actual length of his incarceration until the process runs its course. During this time he will be able to have visitors so long as they are not sick, but you will have to scrub and wear a paper gown over your clothes so as not to chance carrying any germy passengers in on your clothes. He will have his computer at the hospital and have internet and email access. During that time I will have to figure out how to take care of the dogs, house, yard, business and Chris who will be hospitalized in the medical center – and honestly I don't know how to do that. I'm investigating cloning but I'm not sure at this point it's a viable option! LOL!

The point is, while we're doing OK right now, the day will come when we will need help – and a lot of it. I know that during that few weeks, God will provide what I need and help me to have the strength to be where I need to be at the time I need to be there. But it scares me a bit. I take comfort in knowing several things – first, I'm not the first or last person in the world who will go through this. Many have been down this road and lived to tell the story. Second, God will provide, and third, He won't give me more than I can bear. I am a Master organizer, and know how to make sure I do the important things first. But what I've had to work on is realizing I can only do so much and that some things may have to slide until later – a "Better Homes and Gardens" clean house may not be a realistic goal for the next few months. It drives me crazy though and I am counting on God to provide "therapeutic house cleaning time" before it gets so bad that I start getting insane. ☺ After all, what is life if you don't have time to clean off the dust and dog hair from the top of the refrigerator or vacuum up the bugs that have committed suicide on the window sills behind the wood blinds! LOL!

For now, Chris does appreciate your visits, calls and cards. You really have no idea how much it helps to hear from a friend, or have someone pop by the office for a short visit. Please don't think that you will bother us with your calls or visits. If it's a bad time, we'll tell you and we'll call you back.

We have our next round of Dr's visits on June 29th. Unless there is something notable I won't send another update until we have the results from those visits.

He is publishing more regular updates on his Caring Bridge website. The link is below. Please feel free to check this out if you are interested.

Thanks so much for your calls, visits, cards, and prayers. They are sustaining and supporting us so much right now. You will never know how much they are appreciated.

Trish Mims

www.phantomdach.com

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, June 08, 2009 9:17 PM

To: 'phantomdach@earthlink.net'

Subject: Chris Update #9

Hey all,

Sorry I'm a bit late on this weeks update – it's been kind of a crazy week. For those who keep track, this is correctly number Update #9 – seems I did two #7's. If that's the worst thing I screw up I'm doing great!

We had hoped that this last week, being his first "off week" from treatment would be an easy week. Unfortunately it has not been so. He's had a lot of emotional ups and downs from the steroids, and I think to some degree also coming to grips with the fact that this is WAY more than a cold and he isn't going to be better in a week or two.

His stomach nemesis has been back with a vengeance and he has had issues with nausea and vomiting most of the week. We did stop his stomach medicine "Aciphex" for a few days to see if it was causing some of his stomach issues. For the few days he was off of it, it did seem to resolve a great deal of the "food tasting like ick" issue, as well as the "motility" issues, but the steroids were burning his stomach so badly he had to go back on the stomach meds. We will be discussing an alternative medication for protection of his stomach at our next visit with the Gastro Dr – since it seems clear that some of what he is struggling with may well be side effects from his stomach medicine.

He has also developed a consistent pain in his lower right abdomen and a tender spot just above his right leg that seems to be going and coming. We did talk to Dr. Baker this evening and she seems to think he may have developed a hernia. Great! Just what we needed! NOT! She has instructed him to stay off his feet this evening and call his gastroenterologist first thing in the morning. Also to head to the ER tonight if it gets too painful. She is fairly certain it's not appendicitis due to the intermittent nature of the tenderness. I'll have an update tomorrow to let you know about what this ends up being.

He also is to take his first dose of his second series of Chemotherapy tonight. They have increased the dosage by 50% so we are hoping this doesn't end up being a rocky week in more ways than one.

Thank you all for your thoughts and prayers, calls and cards. It means so much to know we are surrounded by so many friends who care.



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, June 01, 2009 8:07 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #7

I delayed my regular Sunday update because we had a MARATHON day of doctor's appointments today and I knew after that there we be more interesting news to pass on.

We started with the Renal Specialists – Good news there – The Lipitor has brought his cholesterol down from 365 to 240 in a month. YEAH! Triglycerides are good, Creatinine still good at 1.2. On the not so great results, his albumin is low at 2.7 and the protein in his urine is continuing to increase. Over all a good result though. The Renal Specialists still say that there is no kidney damage at this point – again some REALLY good news. They did tell us that there is nothing we can do dietary wise to help with the out of spec numbers on Albumin and Protien, and that his most important focus right now is to get through treatment and try to eat as balanced a diet as possible – given that food tastes horrible to him. They checked the blood vessels in the back of his eyes too and no problem there. They expect to just continue monitoring him throughout the course of treatment.

On to the Neurologist to see if a cause could be identified for the numbness he is occasionally experiencing in this pinky and ring finger on both hands. They did a Nerve Conduction Study and an EMG – neither particular painful – mostly just annoying. They seem to think that it may be associated with the Amyloidosis, but feel at this point it's not severe enough to worry with treating. Mostly they just told him to try to not sleep with his arms bent, as they think the problem is being caused by "tension in the ulnar nerve" when his arm is bent. We are quite happy to say that for the foreseeable future we are done with at least this doctor! LOL! They did identify the problem he is having with dizziness, low BP, stomach feeling very full etc as being "autonomic neuropathy" which is common with Amyloid patients. Again, nothing to be done but get the treatment completed and get rid of the Amyloid.

On to the most important Dr – The Hematologist Dr Baker. We had very reasonable readings on BP 104/62, Heart Rate 89 and O2 Sats in his blood 98. Low BP will create a higher than normal resting heart rate – so the 89 is actually pretty good give his current typical BP reading. They took more blood here to check BNP and Troponin levels. We won't have those results back for a day or two. They measure what is going on with his heart in regards to it working too hard, being damaged etc. Last time they were checked they were fine – and we hope to get the same result this time too! Did I mention I'm going to apply to medical school when this is all over?? ;->

He has completed his first 21 day cycle of chemotherapy and is off medication this week. They are increasing his Chemotherapy drug by 50% this next week so we could be in for a bit of a rough ride next week – we hope not but only time will tell. We haven't seen any great response to the first course of treatment, which was kind of what she expected – she started him off on a really baby dose of the meds and is now ramping up the treatment. This will likely continue for the course of however many stints of chemo he has to do. That is still an unknown and will be determined by his response. She did say that at this point its way too premature to even begin to look at any kind of schedule or have any idea as to what the response might be or how quickly it might come. Hopefully by the next check up on June 29th we will begin to see some results.

I will say that he has been staying up later and – at least in my estimation – doing more than he had been for several weeks in the last week. Not to say he's well by any stretch of the

imagination, but he does seem to have a bit more longevity to what energy he does have. Hopefully that trend will continue but with the increase in medication this coming week, we'll just have to see. She also said that there is a possibility of his stem cell collection for his transplant could take place after about the fourth treatment – but that is up to the transplant team. That would make the beginning of that process sometime in September. We hope and pray he will respond well and be in good enough condition to start that process sooner rather than later. She also said that the measures of improvement we will be looking for is a rise in his albumin levels and a decrease in light chain protein in his blood. Hopefully as the medications ramp up, we will start to see results by next month – without any nasty side effects please!

We have begun to suspect that some of the stomach/intestinal issues he has been dealing with are related to the drug Aciphex which he was put on for gastroenteritis prior to being diagnosed with Amyloidosis. Dr Baker has suggested that we discontinue this medication for two weeks and see what happens. He continues to have “gastric motility issues” – which means exactly what it sounds like it means. ☺ We are going to discontinue this medication until our next appointment with the Gastroenterologist on June 16th and see if it makes any difference.

Of special note to Chris's friends from the Katy Family YMCA - One point Dr Baker did make is that Chris needs to do all he can tolerate in the way of exercise, giving particular attention to weight bearing exercise so that he will be strong enough to tolerate this stem cell harvest and transplant when the time comes. Apparently this process is very hard on the muscles and causes a lot of wasting – so Dr Baker has STRONGLY encouraged him to do as much as he can now to prepare for that and make the process less debilitating for him. I'm going to leave it in the hands of his capable friends from aerobics class to try and motivate him to GET IN THE GYM AND GET TO WORK! Go for it girls!

We also have set up a Caring Bridge website for Chris so you can keep up with his progress directly from him on his journal. Feel free to visit as often as you like to keep up with his assessment of the situation.

Chris's Caring Bridge Website:

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrismims>

Thanks so much for your calls, cards and prayers. Jan Foltz has delivered an unbelievable delicious peach/blackberry coffee cake, and her husband Jeff gave made a bag of “Texas trash” snack mix that is really yummy. Guy and Thelma Mauldin came over and relieved us of some of the LOADS of peaches our four peach trees have produced and then returned some of them in a peach cobbler. Thanks y'all! We really appreciate it!

Take care – unless there is something really important to report, I'll send another update next week.



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Sunday, May 24, 2009 11:59 AM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update #7

Hey Y'all,

It's time for the weekly Chris update. Tomorrow will complete two weeks of Chris's Chemotherapy which we expect to last a minimum of four months. Right now it seems like that will be forever, but I know time will fly.

Monday was Chris's first blood work after beginning treatment. Dr. Baker's office called on Tuesday morning with good news that his blood work looked fantastic – keep up the good work! He was feeling pretty good – actually he commented he felt better than he had since Christmas. Then Tuesday came. :-\

The side effects of his treatment can be a little opposed to one another – nothing dignified about some of the issues with these treatments - sorry. The Revlimid lists diarrhea and constipation as possible side effects. How can you have both??? Well, you can – but I don't recommend it. Tuesday afternoon Chris was having extreme difficulty from the stomach upset from his Tuesday morning dose of Dexamethasone. The Revlimid has been causing "slow movement" – how do you delicately put that?? He was in quite a bit of pain with what basically was an intestinal blockage with diarrhea behind it from the Dexamethasone. After a frantic trip to a compounding pharmacist for some special meds at 5PM, we finally got things "moving" well after 11pm. The Compounding Pharmacist was very gracious to wait for me as they normally close at 6PM- I left our office in Katy at 5:30 and managed to Stafford by about 6:10pm praying all the way for God to get me there in time to get the medication Chris needed so we didn't end up at the hospital with an emergency. The Dr calling the in the script had told us this pharmacy closes at 6PM and they don't make exceptions and that it was imperative that we got there before 6PM. Apparently the Doctor didn't know we had influence in High Places! I wasn't sure that we weren't going to end up at the hospital even then, but so far, the blockage issue seems to be resolved for good. Thank God for resolution of this and getting me to the Pharmacy to get the meds safely. I'm learning to appreciate these small miracles that have come my way almost daily.

Chris is still having issues with nausea and fatigue, but we seem to be able to manage them to some degree. He has begun to lay down for a half hour or so after meals and let the nausea pass. This seems to work most of the time and has cut down on his usage of nausea medications. He has been making and enjoying fruit smoothies, which now have an additional fiber ingredient, and those normally taste good to him and don't upset his stomach. He is still working $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ days but is pretty exhausted when he gets home. We are learning that when he is exhausted he HAS to stop. There is nothing that can be gained – expect several day so nausea, vomiting and him being nearly bed ridden - for him to push it beyond the point his body says stop. That means life has to be adjusted moment by moment – and we are just learning to live with that and be grateful that he is doing reasonably well with this treatment.

I've joined an online list called Amyloidosis Support. It has been an amazing source of information about this disease and its treatment, as well as a source of information about real experiences by other patients and their care givers. I can assure there are many with this disease doing far worse than Chris – so we are very grateful that he is doing as well as he is. This group also has connections through its moderator with many of the top Amyloidosis research doctors at Mayo Clinic and Boston University. Very often posts by patients or care givers are forwarded to these advising physicians by the list moderator and we get back advice/suggestions directly from the doctors on the cutting edge of research and treatment for this disease. They also organize meetings with these researchers who make presentations to patients and families on the latest updates on this disease. It's been an amazing group and I'm so happy to have found them. Who ever suspected that there would be such an incredible online resource!

Chris has been having a good bit of nausea and dizziness this weekend, so he's not really feeling up to par at the moment. He will have his next blood work on Tuesday morning and his next "in office" check ups on June 1. That will be a busy day with visits to Dr. Baker (hematologist), Dr Church (neurologist), and the renal specialist. After that series of appointments we should have an update on his early response to the treatment. Dr Baker has requested the neurologist involvement due to some numbness in his pinky and ring finger that has cropped up. Numbness

and tingling (neuropathy) can be an issue with this disease if it attacks nerves – and we know it is doing that because of his low blood pressure problems.

Thank you all for your prayers, calls, cards and emails. We've had so many people surround us and let us know that they will do anything they can to help us. We really appreciate it, and we may have to take you up on your offers at some point. Please don't hesitate to call or email. If it's a bad time we'll tell you. If not, it is such a nice change to talk to people who are having normal lives and not dealing with major illness. ☺

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Sunday, May 17, 2009 10:34 AM
To: 'cmims@farmersagent.com'
Subject: Chris Update #6

Hello all,

We have survived Chris's first week of chemotherapy without too much difficulty. He was very apprehensive about starting the medications as some of the potential side effects are pretty scary, but so far, so good. It hasn't been a cake walk, but it could have been far worse. He's been tired, but nothing really worse than what he had already been experiencing. Friday afternoon after his Tuesday steroid dose wore off was probably the worst. He came home and just collapsed for several hours. He is still managing to work half the three quarter days and did attend aerobics class twice last week. He can't do everything in class, but is still managing to survive about 30 minutes or so. The Doctor says he should do what he can and that these classes will help him be stronger and recover more quickly.

He is still having trouble with gastro-intestinal issues. Food isn't a happy subject around here right now. Things don't taste good, and very often he is nauseated. He is also still occasionally throwing up things that really disagree with him. The most annoying part is the nausea will hit rather suddenly and then up comes the stomach contents, sometimes with very little warning. It's making him reluctant to eat much of anything because he doesn't want to throw up. He knows that not eating is not going to be a good long term plan, and he has been making fruit and yogurt smoothies with some whey protein added to try and be sure he is getting enough nutrition. He is apparently getting enough calories because he's not losing loads of weight. He's trying to eat what he can, but I can surely understand not wanting to eat if you think everything you take in will make you nauseated or cause vomiting!

We did have a bit of an incident on Wednesday when the scale showed a 5 pound weight gain, literally overnight. One of the issues with these meds is fluid retention and that kind of "over night" weight gain is indicative of that. Dr Baker called in some Lasix which he now takes on any morning that he is more than 1 pound heavier than he was the day before. So far, so good on that.

He is still having lots of issues with Low Blood Pressure and its associated symptoms.

In all – it's been a tiring week – but we've not had any disastrous side effects during this first week of treatment so for that we are thankful. It's the first week of what will be a four to six month treatment process. We are certainly praying that it will continue without any of the more serious side effects that are possible, and that he will start to see some relief from some of his disease related symptoms soon.

His next Dr's appointments are June 1st so after that we may have some more detailed information on how the first 21 day treatment cycle worked. He will have a blood draw early this week and that will be a weekly occurrence until his treatment is completed and he is ready for his Bone Marrow Transplant.

Thanks for your continued calls, cards and emails of support. We really appreciate it.

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Monday, May 11, 2009 12:49 PM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #5

Given the protocol we had to go through to get Chris's Chemotherapy drugs, we had concluded that they would be delivered by Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith in their "Men in Black" outfits, complete with Ray Bans and directly from Area 51!

Well, the black helicopter has arrived! But it turned out to be just a brown UPS truck with an unsuspecting driver who thought that we were likely a bunch of insane people! I'm not sure he understood the humor expressed by Chris and Connie in our office when the delivery was finally made.

Chris will take his first dose of Revlimid tonight and his first 40mg dose of Dexemethesone tomorrow morning. Chris is – as to be expected – somewhat apprehensive about potential side effects. Although we have been told repeatedly that while there are side effects, loosing your hair isn't one of them – something for which Chris continues to be very grateful! ☺

Revlimid Side effects include nausea, diarrhea, constipation; dry or itchy skin; runny or stuffy nose; muscle or joint pain; headache; or tiredness.

There is also a possibility of DVT / Blood Clots and bleeding issues while on this drug but that doesn't happen all that commonly.

The Dexemethesone which is a steroid, can cause Difficulty sleeping; feeling of a whirling motion; increased appetite; increased sweating; indigestion; mood changes; nervousness. He does have a prescription of Ambien to help him sleep which I think will end up being very useful. We have heard from a support group I'm part of online that the Dex frequently results in two or three days of no sleep and then a HUGE crash. He needs his rest and the Doctor agreed that it would be better for him to take a sleep aid and be rested than go through the enormous high and low of the large dosage of the steroid.

A few other notes in the way of catching up since the last update:

We did have our regular monthly visit with the renal specialist last Friday. The results of his labs for that visit show his protein output has nearly doubled since last month. This is a sign that the disease is progressing and we need to get treatment going sooner rather than later. The good news was that his creatinine levels had crept up but only by .1, and everything else looked pretty good on blood work – so they still don't think he has any kidney damage at this point – for which we are also very grateful. They did tell us his cholesterol has jumped

to 360 from the last reading of 205. The Renal Specialist did give him a Lipitor prescription to help with that. She also told us not to be concerned about it as this is apparently very common in situations where kidneys are having issues – as he is right now. She said that his cholesterol level should return to normal once his treatment is finished and his amyloidosis is in remission and he won't have to continue taking that prescription.

We got a lengthy letter from his hematologist on Friday. It was addressed to his Renal Specialist and detailed his case. She noted in her letter that while he does have some cardiac involvement, at this point there is nothing that should preclude him from being a candidate for an analogous Bone Marrow Transplant once his treatment is completed. We were very happy to see that in writing! An Analogous Bone Marrow transplant is a procedure where they will harvest his own stem cells once he is in remission and re-implant those in his body. He should be hospitalized for only a few weeks, and will be able to see healthy visitors during that time as well as have his computer with him to make use of the hospital WY-FI to get email, do work, etc. In all, about the best case scenario for him at this point! We laughed hysterically at one point she noted in the letter – seems he has “gall bladder sludge”. WELL HECK! If we had known that it would have solved ALL his problems! LOL!! He's interested in contacting STP and seeing if he can develop a Gall Bladder Sludge treatment similar to their oil treatment for cars. He has not lost his sense of humor entirely!

I can also say that the collection of prescription bottles is also becoming very impressive. We have a new understanding of people whose lives revolve around when they have to take their next medications! I can say also this isn't something we every really wanted to have an intimate understanding of though. :-\

Overall Chris is feeling OK. He gets tired and his most annoying problem at the moment is orthostatic hypotension – which simply put means his blood pressure is tanking when we goes from sitting to standing. It makes him feel fatigued, nauseated and light headed. We did a great job of managing that this weekend. He would be up for about 45 minutes and start to feel yucky, so he would retire to his new recliner for a few minutes and would be feeling quite good again in short order. He's trying to do a similar routine at the office – and when he feels yucky he just goes and lays on the sofa for a bit until he feels better. It's clear that getting overtired right now is not something he can afford to do. So we are going to have to find ways to manage this until his BP starts responding to the treatment. The doctor has suggested some compression stockings if his BP doesn't start stabilizing pretty quickly. Now He might be getting to find out what it feels like to wear panty hose in the summer! LOL! Its a small price to pay if it will control his BP for the time being and help him to feel better otherwise.

I've mentioned the new recliner – and it has been money well spent already. Chris had the idea that he might like somewhere very comfortable to relax when he was feeling yucky and not have to be in the bed all the time. His chair in the living room he had picked out a couple of years ago and it is a wicker high back style chair – but not the most perfect chair for lounging. I love my sofa, but it's a complete dog as far as being comfortable to sit on or lay on. It has turned out to be a very expensive, leather dog bed, because we haven't found too many people who really like to sit on the dang thing! The dogs don't mind it at all though. So I guess that worked out. Last Thursday when Chris got home we ran down to a local furniture store and he found a nice recliner that I could live with and he was comfortable in. I'm NOT a recliner fan – but for the time being, this has turned out to be a perfect solution for him. He can be very comfortable, watch TV, be in the main part of the house, and not just be in the bed like a sick person all the time.

We received a lovely lap quilt from Markel Sewell this past Friday. It goes with his new chair like it was made for it. It was done by Sewn In Love www.sewn-in-love.org an organization who makes lap sized quilts for cancer patients. He has spent a good bit of the weekend wrapped up in his quilt and relaxing in his chair. The low BP makes him cold all the time. Thanks Markel! What a perfect and thoughtful gesture! He knows someone is praying for him and thinking of him every time he wraps up in it!

We got a chance to visit with dear old friends Jim and Marsha Riley on Saturday evening. We have known the Riley's since about 1982 – And that's a REALLY long time! Jim and I share very close birthdays – and this was a special year for my dear old friend – he's going to be 60 on Thursday. There's something wrong with some of my dearest friends being 60. I can't quite put my finger on it. We had a lovely evening on the porch just talking and watching lightening bugs and Marsha brought a good supply of home made chocolate chip cookies. They are magic cookies because they are about the only thing that hasn't upset Chris's stomach for weeks. He's been munching on cookies all weekend! She made me some Oatmeal cookies for my Birthday and they are also delicious! Thanks Marsha! You may be on the tap for more cookies if Chris keeps doing so well eating yours!

We know that there is great power in many Believers agreeing in prayer.

For now, Chris and I would like you to specifically agree with us in prayer on the following:

- He will respond quickly and miraculously to his chemotherapy
- He will not experience any of the more serious side effects associated with his treatment and his less serious one's will be manageable
- He will be in complete remission on the 4 to 6 month end of the treatment scale rather than the 12 to 18 month end
- He will be in the hospital and successfully complete his Bone Marrow Transplant before the years end with few or no side effects.

This week's sermon by our Pastor Jim Leggett was from Genesis 22 – vs 1 states God tested Abraham. Boy are we beginning to understand Abraham! Pastor Jim also referenced 1 Corinthians 10:13 No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; He'll never let you be pushed past your limit; He'll always be there to help you come through it. It has been amazing how the current sermon series in Genesis has been EXACTLY what we needed to hear from week to week. Amazing huh??

On a sad note, we received word that a long time friend of ours David Matizza is battling pancreatic cancer and has been given three months to live. Also pray that we would be able to be in some way helpful to David in his fight. He has little family and is suffering greatly at the moment.

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers and there will be more updates coming as Chris begins his Chemotherapy. If you want to get a more detailed and medical insight into the disease the Chris is battling you can check out the following website.

Boston University

<http://www.bu.edu/amyloid/about/what/index.html>

You can reach Chris directly at cmims@farmersagent.com

Trish Mims



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Saturday, May 02, 2009 10:38 AM

To: 'Christopher Mims'

Subject: Chris Update #4
Good Morning Everyone –

First, let me say thanks to everyone for their thoughts, prayers, emails and cards. It really helps to know there are plenty of people out there “in your army” when going through something like what Chris and I have to deal with now. It’s been a REALLY long week. But we are soldiering on. We had his “diagnosis” appointment at 3PM yesterday. If you ever have to go through something like this you definitely want Dr. Kelty Ruth Baker on your side. She and her staff are real dynamos! We feel so fortunate that God led us to her for diagnosis and treatment. She did do her undergraduate work at our cross town rival Rice University, but we won’t hold that against her! Her NP is Lisa Bayne. She is an Oregon Duck – but she has promised not to beat either of us up just because we went to University of Houston. LOL! For those of you who don’t know the Oregon Duck Mascot attacked our UH Mascot at a football game in Oregon a few years ago and ended up suspended by the NCAA.

Now – for the results of the meeting which is what you all really want to hear anyway –

READERS DIGEST CONDENSED VERSION:

- Chris has been diagnosed with Primary Amyloidosis
- He does NOT have the required “over 10%” of messed up plasma cells in his bone marrow to be diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma
- He will be starting chemotherapy – Revlimid – shortly – along with a very small dose weekly of Dexamethasone and Baby Aspirin – Side effects similar to what he is already experiencing so this treatment isn’t likely to make him feel much worse than he does right now.
- His hair WILL NOT fall out during treatment – if you know Chris you know what a big deal that is!
- They expect his symptoms – stomach issues, VERY low BP, loosing protein in his urine, fatigue, etc – to begin to resolve in 4 to 6 months, but could take up to 1 to 1.5 years to completely clear.
- He will likely have a bone marrow transplant at some point in the future – probably at least 1 year away – perhaps even longer way than that.
- This will be a harvesting and growing of his own marrow and reintroducing that into his body – hospitalization will be only a couple of weeks vs. several months with WAY less side effects – and the Dr said he can have visitors so long as they aren’t sick and his computer etc during that time – he should be able to work some and communicate via email while hospitalized.
- Dr Baker has a very positive outlook at this point since he doesn’t have loads of systems in his body involved and she doesn’t think anything really permanently damaged at this point. He does have a significant thickening of the walls of his heart which is a result of the disease, and heart issues in the future are her single biggest concern.
- Of special note to one particular family reading this – Yes, we can go on a cruise next February! YEAH! We’ll give the treatment a month or two to see how things go before we book, but at this point at least we don’t have a “NO” from the medical team!

Chris is sleeping right now, but I’m sure later today would love to hear from anyone who wants to talk to him. Or you can email him at cmims@farmersagent.com

CHRIS’S NOVELLA – CHAPTER 4 – For those who want the gory details!

What a LONG, LONG week! Both of us struggled with waiting last week. Jim Leggett’s sermon series in Genesis was played over and over in my mind this week.

Genesis 15:1 “Don’t be Afraid”, Paul Helbig’s sermon from last week Genesis 17:1 I am God Almighty, Walk before me and be blameless”, Matt 6::25 “Therefore I tell you do not worry about your life” ...

We know God is Almighty, we know that he cares for us and is in control, and we knew better than to be paralyzed with fear. But knowing is one thing – doing isn’t always so easy. The

challenge this week was letting God BE Almighty and walking. There have been days this week when we both just wanted to collapse – and I'm sure there will be more to come. But for now – we are walking!

For me personally, I don't know if I could have survived these last few weeks without knowing that there was an amazing girl friend, Markel Sewell, and dear relatives Sue Donald (cousin's wife), Mary Miller (mom), Melba (aunt) and sister's Susan and Angie supporting me. None of these amazing women are physically here with me, but I can't tell you how many times my blackberry passed on a quick note of encouragement at just the moment I REALLY needed it! God bless you ladies! What is even more amazing is that the "relatives" before 2005 would have never been a part of my life. God put them there before I needed them. Pretty cool really, but a LONG story for another day. For now, you ladies have put skin on God's love – and I just want you all to know how much I appreciate that.

Friday finally arrived and we made it to our appointment with plenty of time to spare – As always greeted by the cheerful office staff and taken in to our appointment promptly. Oddly enough seeing other patients in the waiting room that didn't "look" sick was an encouragement. There is life still to be lived. If you are sitting this Dr's waiting room, you are sick, no doubt, but these people seemed to be getting on with life despite their circumstances. If they can so can we!

Dr Baker started with going over all the test results from the last few weeks:

- They did get the tissue samples from Chris's endoscopic procedure a few weeks ago and re-examine that. They did find amyloid deposits in those samples confirming that his digestive issues are a part of the disease and they will be issuing a revised lab report from that procedure to document these new findings.
- The Echocardiogram showed his heart muscle is thickened – which is typical of Amyloidosis
- His BNP is 117 – Normal is under 100, Brain Natriuretic Peptid – is a measure of the amount of BNP in your blood and is an indication of how well your heart is working. Dr Baker was not concerned about this slightly elevated level at this time.
- Troponin was normal – These results are excellent even with the BNP being slightly outside of normal. Troponin is an enzyme that is measured in the blood and is released by a damaged heart.
- He is passing 3520 mg of protein daily in his urine – should be more liked 100mg – but she often sees Amyloid patients losing 12000mg/day or more so this isn't so bad.
- The Bone Marrow procedure samples were processed in three ways – First by machine showing 6% goofed up Plasma Cells, Second by manual count by a Dr which showed 15% goofed up plasma cells, the one other way which showed 10% goofed up plasma cells. The result of that is he DOES NOT have the required "over 10%" of goofed up plasma cells in his bone marrow to be diagnosed as having multiple myeloma. THANK GOD! Dr Baker said he is borderline, but none of the Doctors who looked at this case felt Multiple Myeloma would be a correct diagnosis – so he remains categorized as an "Amyloid" patient.
- His liver and kidney ultrasounds showed no involvement or problems with either of these organs.
- His spleen (I KNOW you were all sitting around wondering how Chris's spleen was doing!) is "slightly enlarged" – normal is 12 cm – his is 12.9 – no biggie as far as Dr Baker is concerned.
- Dr Baker feels we have made an early diagnosis – which is why she feels positive about this outcome of treatment. There is limited involvement from the systems of his body. She says often this disease isn't diagnosed until irreversible damage has been done to many organs because this disease "acts like" so many other things. We are certainly blessed that God helped us to find the right doctors at the right time so that we aren't dealing with major issues such as heart, kidney and liver failure along with trying to combat his root disease – the Amyloidosis. She feels that at this point no permanent damage has been

- done to any organs so with treatment he should be fine. But she also said it may be 4 to 6 months or more before he begins to see resolution of many of the symptoms.
- Right now the stomach and BP issues are the most debilitating – along with the fatigue. His BP in the office yesterday was 100/60 sitting and 84/50 standing. This disease causes your circulatory system to lose its ability to expand and contract, hence you lose your ability to control your Blood Pressure. Hopefully this will resolve sooner rather than later, because I think the extremely low BP is a lot of what is making him so tired and nauseated all the time.

His Diagnosis is “Primary Amyloidosis”. Here’s the detail on this disease from the information Dr. Baker provided us yesterday.

Primary Amyloidosis – An uncommon disease process is associated with the deposit of the material called “amyloid” (from the French word meaning “starch”) in tissues such as the heart, the gastrointestinal tract, the nerves, the skin and other sites. Although there are several types of amyloid, one type is caused by the deposit of immunoglobulin light chains in the tissues. In some patients with myeloma, light chains made by their plasma cells can result in the formation of amyloid and its deposition in tissues. This type of amyloidosis can occur with or without overt myeloma. In patients with myeloma-associated amyloid, the involvement of the heart, intestines or nerves can produce dysfunction in those organs, significantly complicating the management of the myeloma. In other patients, the marrow may not have increased numbers of plasma cells and the bones may not be affected. The malignant B cells, which make the light chains that deposit themselves in the tissue and form the amyloid, are too few to be identified by a marrow biopsy.

Chris will be taking an oral chemotherapy called Revlimid (lenalidamide – which is a cousin of thalidomide). He will take this therapy daily for 21 days, then be off for 7 days, then repeat – for at least four to six months, maybe longer. He will only have to visit the Dr every 28 days. He will have to have weekly blood work to watch for low blood counts which are just one of the side effects of the treatment. He will also take a once weekly – and very small dose – of dexamethasone, and baby aspirin. He won’t lose his hair, and the other side effects are similar to what he is already experiencing so the treatment shouldn’t make him feel markedly worse than he already does. Dr Baker expects this phase of treatment to last at least 4 to 6 months and perhaps longer and she does think as the amyloid is knocked out of his body his symptoms will begin to resolve and he will begin to feel better.

Funny story about the Revlimid – This drug apparently comes from Area 51. We had to fill out a BUNCH of paperwork to get the script, he will have to do a phone interview with the manufacturer before he gets an authorization code to get it filled, he should expect the manufacturer to check on him to make sure he’s abiding by the rules, and Dr Baker had a lengthy discussion about birth defects and this medication. She said no one else is to take it, or even touch it. If he is hospitalized, he should take this medication with him, and he is not allowed to let the nurses dispense it – it is to be kept in only his possession and he must administer it to himself. She made a HUGE point that he is REQUIRED to notify their office immediately if he has “unprotected sex” with anyone who might become pregnant. And he is required to use two forms of birth control if he does have sex. So what does he ask the Doctor?? So I have to call you if I’m sexually assaulted by a bus load of hot cheer leaders – right?? She laughed, but seriously, this drug is linked with serious birth defects and she did a wonderful job of executing her responsibility of making sure he was informed. She did seem relieved that I had a hysterectomy over 10 years ago so no chance of an OPPTS baby with this 49 year old wife. I did tell her that if he was having sex with anyone but me the drug would be the least of his concerns. She laughed at that too and said she could TOTALLY relate! She said her husband said he would never cheat on her because he was afraid he would wake up dead – she told him “No dear – you wouldn’t wake up!”. Interestingly enough, if the meds cause problems and he can’t take them he will be required to return any unused portion to the manufacturer. This particular drug is VERY closely controlled by the Federal Government – so we are finally getting some benefit from our tax dollars! LOL!

As for Bone Marrow Transplant – she used a fancy technical term for what he will likely get – We recorded our meeting with her so I can go back and listen again – but I haven't done that yet so no big medical words for you this morning. It will be a procedure where they harvest his post treatment healthy bone marrow, grow it and re-implant it. She did say it will be probably 1 to 1.5 years away, and we can't know for sure now if he will end up having to do that for a bunch of reasons. Hospitalization will be MUCH shorter than what we had read about this procedure, and side effect will be much less. He would likely be hospitalized for a few weeks rather than a few months, and he would be able to have visitors so long as they aren't sick. He will be able to have his computer so he can receive email, etc and maybe even do a little work. Dr Baker said she's very often seen people have clients meet them in the hospital and conduct business – so while it's not something to really look forward too – it doesn't sound as if he will be completely incapacitated for months if/when he ends up having to do this procedure. She did say his case would be reviewed by the “transplant board” and while she doesn't see any issues right now, should the thickening of his heart become problematic it might be a reason that the transplant team wouldn't approve him for the procedure.

The objectives of his treatment will be first to get remission so the abnormal protein isn't being produced, and remove the protein from the affected organs – at this point heart, kidneys, gastrointestinal tract, and circulatory system, and then we would begin to talk about Bone Marrow Transplant or not.

Other than that he is pretty much allowed to do what he feels up to doing – which at this point isn't all that much really. He does have an immune system issue so he needs to use good common sense. He is allowed to attend exercise class – but must listen to his body and not over do it, he can eat what he wants but should watch sodium. We can travel and go on cruises – YEAH! We'll have to see how treatment is going before we book our next excursion, but at least we can go if he feels up to it! Bummer is he will have to be a t-totaller once treatment starts – no wine, no margaritas, no alcohol at all. RATS! We're not drunks by any stretch of the imagination, but we do enjoy wine and margaritas occasionally. Oh well – small sacrifice to make to have him healthy again! The bit thing we have to watch for is potential heart issues associated with the thickening of his heart wall.

We came out of the visit yesterday feeling like we had gotten the best possible outcome and for that we are very grateful to God. He is really and quite seriously sick, but it is treatable and Dr Baker is hopeful that he won't see too many side affects and will get through the treatment just fine.

We aren't out of God's Waiting Room and we won't be for a good while, so for now, we will strive daily to let God be Almighty (which he is really good at even if we don't recognize it), walk before him, and not be afraid. Again thank you to those who have taken the time to call, and send us notes of support and encouragement. I can not tell you what a huge difference it makes to know that you aren't alone. This is not what I had in mind for 2009, but from it there have already been lessons learned, and I'm sure more will come.

Trish Mims



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, April 24, 2009 3:25 PM

Subject: Chris Update #3

What a day. We are home and Chris is sleeping. I'm sure that he would love to visit with any of you in person that want to give him a call tomorrow. This evening he needs to rest.

We started at 9am this morning with the Bone Marrow Biopsy. It did not go well. Apparently, Chris does not respond normally to lidocaine (the local anesthetic) and it does not deaden completely on him. The result was the Bone Marrow procedure was excruciatingly painful for him. The doctor was not able to actually get the biopsy. However, she did manage to get the "bone aspirate" which she says will tell her everything she needs to know. Given the amount of pain he was in, she didn't feel at this point that there was any real reason to have the bone marrow tissue sample. Thank God she did tell us that if/when he ever has to do another of these they will plan for some IV anesthetic so it won't be such a traumatic experience for him. He's still in pain now and just took some Tylenol and hit the sack.

I was sitting there holding his hand and I can attest to the fact that he was in real, and very serious pain. If I get a say they won't be doing one of those with only a local anesthetic again. For him it was truly an awful experience I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

We did manage to get the ultrasound of kidneys and liver as well as the echocardiogram both completed without incident after the horrible morning with the biopsy.

I do not think it helped to much this morning that the biopsy was done in the "Cell and Gene Therapy" unit at Methodist Hospital. It's like going into a space capsule. There are two double doors, several hand washing stations and EVERYONE entering is required to thoroughly wash hands, and then another set of two more double, automatic doors to enter. It does appear that they have a reverse pressure air system because the second set of door – when opening – release air pressure and blow any air from the outside back from the entrance – I suppose to avoid contamination from outside sources in this clinic.

I also think being in that environment, and seeing a lot of REALLY sick people didn't do much for his mental state. The interior decoration of this unit left something to be desired to. Don't get me wrong, the place was lovely and well decorated – except for the "barf bag dispensers" hanging all over the waiting room. :-\ I guess you must find humor in these things or you will cry!

We are at the beginning of a long journey – one that we don't know the outcome of yet. Our next appt to get the results from today's tests is Friday, May 1, 2009. I'll send another update after that Dr's meeting.

Thanks you so much for your calls, cards and prayers. This is truly a difficult road we have ahead and we won't be able to walk it without God's help and the support of some really great friends.

You can email Chris directly if you like at cmims@farmersagent.com

Trish Mims



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, April 21, 2009 9:23 AM

Subject: Chris Update #2

As we expected, Chris does have appointments for Friday, April 24th for Bone Marrow Biopsy, Echocardiogram and Ultrasound of Kidneys and Liver. They said we should be there by 9am and should be finished no later than 1pm – so hopefully they will hold that schedule.

The Dr has already made an appointment for May 1st for going over results and setting a detailed treatment plan.

I'll be sure to let you guys know more as soon as we know more.

As for Chris, he's doing pretty well – aside from fatigue and upset stomach. He's able to work and has even attended some of his much loved aerobics classes – albeit with some scaled back difficulty – and hopes to do that this week as well. I'm glad he's doing that because it will help him tremendously with the mental aspects of dealing with all this.

Thanks so much for you prayers and support.

Trish Mims



From: Trish Mims [mailto:phantomdach@earthlink.net]
Sent: Saturday, April 18, 2009 10:46 AM
To: 'Christopher Mims'
Subject: Chris Update

April 18, 2009

First let me say that we are so thankful for all the support, prayers and cards Chris has received during the last few months of trying to figure out what has been going on with his health. We have some answers, and more will be coming in the next couple of weeks. This isn't going to be the Reader's Digest condensed version because Trish wrote it. She's a novelist at heart!

First I'd like to recap a bit on this history so everyone is completely up to date. Last fall, Chris decided to take steps to get set up with a new Family Medicine physician near our office and easier to access. Trish had been using Dr Shelley Ferrill for a while for "cold and sniffles" and liked her and her staff. Dr. Ferrill gets high marks from many in the Katy area so Chris called to make an appointment to have an office visit, physical and ask a few questions about some minor issues that were concerning him.

In that visit Dr. Ferrill did a thorough check, running an EKG, doing blood tests, and urine samples. At that time she identified an "abnormal EKG" and "protein in his urine" and suggested he needed to see a cardiologist ASAP and then a Kidney specialist to determine the cause of the protein loss.

We had already been acquainted with a local cardiologist, Dr. Anil Odhav, who also is a wonderful physician and highly recommended by many in the Katy area. Dr. Odhav did a complete workup, including a stress test. Amazingly Chris did not reach target heart rate on the treadmill until nearly 12 minutes into the test. However, Dr. Odhav did see things in the tests that caused him concern and proceeded with an angioplasty to be sure that there were no blocked arteries. Chris's EKG said – without question – he had previously had a heart attack. The good news after the arteriogram was that there was no blockage and no evidence of a heart attack. Dr. Odhav said that an "electrical circuit" in Chris's heart had "shorted out" and rerouted itself, and there was no cause for concern.

Shortly after this, Chris had been scheduled for his routine colonoscopy with Dr. George Whalen. There is a history of Colon Cancer in his family so he regularly has these checks every couple of years. There was nothing found here and we were happy about that.

Sometime in December Chris visited a Katy area kidney specialist who did a few tests, but didn't identify the cause of the protein. He wanted to do a kidney biopsy, but Chris was not comfortable with this Doctor and we decided to indentify a Kidney Specialist in the Medical Center to pursue the cause of his issues with protein loss. After Trish's illness in the late 1990's we discovered a few things about Doctors and Hospitals – primarily they are NOT all created equal and it is foolish to not take advantage of the amazing Texas Medical Center and its resources if you are dealing with anything more than a hangnail!

Chris called Dr Brian Powers, a urologist, who had been instrumental in keeping Trish alive in the late 1990's when she had a surgery gone wrong and ended up having to have some major reconstruction work done to repair a surgical error. Dr. Powers recommended the Renal Specialists of Houston and we proceeded with scheduling an appointment in February – which was the first available. We got more information from the initial visit with the nurse in that office than we had gotten in several office visits with the Kidney Doctor in Katy. So we were happy with the choice to move Chris care to that office.

On December 30th – just before the New Year, Chris had a very violent coughing attack. He felt as if he was gagging and ended up throwing up. In the process he broke many blood vessels in and around his eyes and ended up looking like something out of a really awful horror movie. The whites of his eyes completely filled with blood, and he had two very bad black eyes. He looked like he had been in a bar fight! We did visit Dr Ferrill about that on New Years Eve and were sent to the emergency room where we were told “sometimes this happens, there's nothing we can do, it will dissipate on its own”. So off we went, assuming that was the end of the story and this was a freak occurrence.

After this New Years attack, Chris wasn't feeling well and had begun to have ever increasing gastric issues. He visited Dr. Whalen again and was scheduled for an Endoscopy to make sure there was nothing going on in his upper digestive tract. He had begun to have a lot of nausea, a very sensitive gag reflex, and increasing difficulty in swallowing and eating. The Endoscopy didn't reveal anything but what Dr Whalen called a “VERY angry stomach”. He was put on a prescription and bland diet to help resolve that issue and again we went home thinking OK, one issue down.

In the process we had since visited with Dr. Finch at the Renal Specialists of Houston and taken a few steps to try and determine the cause of his protein loss. They had identified that he was passing “Monoclonal Lambda” protein in his urine, which was being overproduced by his bone marrow and recommended he see a Hemotologist – Dr. Kelty Baker. A kidney biopsy was performed on April 2nd at Dr. Baker's request, and on April 10th we received a call from Dr. Kelty Baker's office saying they wanted to see Chris “sooner rather than later” and we visited Dr. Baker on April 17th at 2:30 pm. So that brings us up to date with the history of this journey.

Yesterday at Dr. Baker's office we visited with Lisa Bayne RN and Dr. Baker for the first time. Chris's Kidney Biopsy revealed he has a condition called "Lambda Light Chain Amyloidosis". This condition is caused by plasma cells overproducing Lambda Light Chain proteins and those proteins get jammed up in the body in different places. They commonly build up in the kidney, heart, liver, and thyroid and can also affect the intestinal tract. Dr. Baker believes that all of the issues affecting Chris in the last few months are related to the Amyloidosis. She says the Amyloid deposits in the kidneys are causing the protein loss, and that likely the bad EKG is a result of similar deposits in his heart. She also believes the "angry stomach" is a result of this disease – apparently it can affect the digestive tract's ability to move food through and also to absorb nutrients. The only deficiency on any of Chris's blood work to date has been a diagnosed yet unexplained deficiency in Vitamin D.

Dr. Baker's plan is to proceed with a Bone Marrow Biopsy – which will likely be done April 24th - to determine the extent/advancement of his condition. She says if they find more than 10% of these certain plasma cells in his bone marrow, then he will be considered to have "multiple myeloma" – which is a blood cancer. In either case the treatment is the same – a pill form of chemotherapy.

She also plans to proceed with an Echocardiogram on his heart to determine if there are deposits there, and a liver and kidney scan to determine the advancement of the condition and whether there are any Amyloid deposits that might be affecting these organs.

Her message to us is **"THIS IS VERY TREATABLE!"** Chris will undergo a Chemotherapy treatment designed to kill the errant plasma cells. It is an aggressive treatment, but according to Dr. Baker he shouldn't experience too many side effects most people think of such as hair loss, etc. He should mostly be able to go on with his normal life during treatment. They do expect the treatment to be prolonged – six months or more, and ultimately he will likely undergo a bone marrow transplant. The idea is to knock out the disease, and put it in remission. She did say it will recur and he will have to be watched for the rest of his life. When it recurs he will undergo the same treatment to knock it out again. She also said there is A LOT of promising research going on and she really is expectant that in our lifetimes there will be an actual cure for this disease.

Here's a website with some information about "Multiple Myeloma"

http://www.multiplemyeloma.org/about_myeloma/

We won't know for sure if Chris has this until after the Bone Marrow biopsy, but the Amyloidosis is just a less severe form of the same disease and even if he is not diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, he will still undergo about the same treatment regime.

Here is a website on Amyloidosis if you are interested in learning more:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/amyloidosis/DS00431>

Dr. Baker said there are two major centers of research on this disease, the Mayo Clinic and Boston University. Also MDAnderson in Houston and then Dr. Baker who we have

been led to. She did say she would be more than happy to help us get connected with one of those other centers of expertise if we wished. We like her and her staff a lot, and feel very comfortable right now with pursuing treatment with her.

One other interesting note is that Chris's Dad had been diagnosed some years ago with Waldenstroms Macroglobulinemia. What Chris has is a "cousin" to that disease. There isn't a solid "known cause" for Chris's condition but they do feel there is a strong hereditary component.

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Sites-Types/WM>

The other thing we would like to say to you, is that we do not believe in "chance" in our lives. The last few weeks of trying to get a diagnosis has been harrowing and often VERY scary with us knowing all kinds of possibilities, but not having any real answers. Last Sunday our Pastor Jim Leggett spoke on Genesis 15:1 "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your very great reward". We both needed to hear exactly that at that minute. We were afraid – terrified in fact – at the possibilities that lay in front of us. What we needed to remember and act on is that God is a Great and Mighty God and is bigger than us, and anything we may face. He CAN handle it – and we thank Pastor and friend Mitch Pearson for reminding us of that!

In the last few months we have reconnected in very meaningful ways with people we haven't had a lot of contact with in many years. Markel Sewell has been a constant support to Trish. We knew the Sewells well when we first married – 29 years ago. Markel and Trish reconnected just a few weeks ago through Facebook. The wonders of the internet and technology have allows so many people to support us it has really kind of been amazing to watch.

After our visit with Dr Baker yesterday the confusion and fear of the last few months seems to be cleared, and we now know what we are dealing with. It was no coincidence that Chris decided to change Doctors last fall – if he hadn't done that this disease, which is rare and often undiagnosed until major organ damage is done, would have gone undiscovered. In each step of the last few months, even though we often have felt confused and afraid, God has moved us into contact with people and Doctors that have positioned us perfectly to fight the battle we find in front of us today.

Updates will come, but for now, you know what we face. Thanks you so much friends. We are grateful for your prayerful support during this time and we hope you will continue to lift us up. This is bigger than us and only God can handle it so our challenge will be to let Him do what he does best – be Mighty and Amazing! We also hope that – while we are not perfect and often not particularly good examples of our faith – that in all this you will see that God does work in our lives. Even in the imperfect lives of people like us. We are so fortunate to have caught this before any major organ damage occurred. Chris's blood work shows no loss of function in any major organs right now. That in itself is a miracle.

Chris & Trish Mims