

Dear friends,

I am writing to tell you of the heartbreaking situation my daughter Ashley is in, and to ask for your help in accessing treatment that finally offers us a glimmer of hope.

Eight years ago, Ashley was a happy, healthy 14-year-old. She was academically bright, had good friends, and her life was full of possibility. Then she got sick. Countless doctors could not find the cause, while Ashley continued to become sicker and sicker. We tried many alternative health treatments, with only temporary improvement. Ashley's condition deteriorated so much that for the last three years she has been bedridden, in extreme pain, and can barely communicate. I have had to give up my job in order to take care of her. And, tragically, this was entirely preventable.



Ashley with her cousin, in 2004.

A few years ago I read an article about Lyme disease (borreliosis) and remembered seeing a bullseye rash – a typical symptom of a borreliosis-infected tick bite - on Ashley's arm before she became ill. I thought, finally! This is not a vague syndrome that can't be treated; this is something that can be cured! Unfortunately, I soon discovered that Australian medical professionals are woefully under-informed about borreliosis testing, diagnosis and treatment. Officially, there is no borreliosis in Australia and therefore little awareness or information about it. Many doctors refused to even test Ashley, so strong is their belief that there is no Lyme disease in Australia. (See this recent television report: <http://tinyurl.com/m7qle7p>).

Finally I found a doctor who agreed to test her; the result was positive. Ashley started treatment for borreliosis in May 2013 – more than seven years after first becoming ill. By this time she had developed severe gastroparesis (partial paralysis of the stomach), opportunistic infections, dysautonomia (failure of the autonomic nervous system), Addison's disease and a long list of other neurological symptoms. At her worst, I really believed she would die; she could not walk, was in constant pain and often didn't have the strength to lift her head. She would drift in and out of consciousness, had constant nausea and belching, and could barely eat a thing.

Treatment has been arduous; Ashley is in a very weakened condition and suffers strong side effects from certain medication. But overall she has had some improvement: she is usually able to make it to the toilet unassisted, doesn't lose consciousness as often, and is eating better. She is still bedbound and it could take many years for her health to improve enough to function in a meaningful capacity. Sadly, earlier diagnosis and treatment would have made all the difference.

Our doctor has recommended that Ashley travel to Germany for a comprehensive borrelia treatment that uses hyperthermia among other things to assist the body to fight the disease. (Information on hyperthermia and treatment protocol is attached for those interested in the details.) Many of this doctor's very ill Lyme disease patients have had this treatment with good results. It won't be a miracle cure, but I believe that Ashley will have a better chance at recovery if she is able to have this treatment.

One of the silent side effects of this disease has been the slow decay of social normality during years and years of illness. Ashley and I have become isolated from the majority of our family and friends. I found it difficult to relate and talk about normal day to day things, and got tired of constantly updating about Ashley's health. It is also painful to see and hear about healthy kids growing up, going to school, learning how to drive, going to university or traveling - I can't help feeling extreme emotional pain, knowing that this is what Ashley should have been doing. Of course it has not been all doom and gloom. We know we are thought of and cared for by our family and friends, even if we have been out of contact for much of this time. We really do have a lot to be thankful for.

After struggling with this disease for almost 9 years, we are desperate to take this opportunity to get Ashley well and have some sort of normality back in our lives. The German treatment offers us this hope. But it's not going to be easy. Ashley cannot sit up for more than a few minutes at a time so we will have to fly business class or use a special airline stretcher service – both of which are costly – to enable her to lie down for most of the trip. The standard treatment at this clinic is two weeks, however, due to the severity of her condition Ashley will need to stay longer. The cost at the moment is €22500 for 3 weeks. With travel, my accommodation at the Clinic and stopover/transfer fees we are looking at approximately \$50,000 Australian dollars (This figure does not include adjunct therapies before and after treatment). At this stage we are planning to travel in March 2015 and availability has been confirmed with the clinic. I am prepared to do whatever it takes to get Ashley better; and from the results I have seen from patients who have had this treatment, I am confident that it will have a positive impact on her health. But we cannot make this trip without help.

Please help us in whatever way you can – every contribution will make a difference:

- contribute to the cost of medical treatment via bank transfer (within Australia), or Paypal;
- if you know of any charities or other possible donors, please help us to access these sources;
- share this appeal through your own friends, family and networks.

Even if you are not in a position to donate, please spread the word about the inadequacies of borreliosis (Lyme disease) diagnosis and treatment in Australia, and don't delay in getting any suspicious bites properly checked!

Thank you in advance for any contribution or support you are able to offer.

Love and best wishes,

Gina and Ashley