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## MUM-OF-FOUR FIGHTS KILLER DISEASE WITH MIRACLE TRANSPLANT

First Sharon Frazer noticed a few bruises. Then her gums started to bleed. Then she felt really exhausted.

The 49-year-old mum-of-four from Killara attributed her bruises to clumsiness, her bleeding gums to inadequate flossing, and her fatigue to the pre-Christmas craziness.

When she finally got to the GP, she got the shock of her life - her life was on the line.

That same day she was admitted to Royal North Shore Hospital and diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia, a bone marrow cancer which saw her start chemotherapy almost immediately.

The chemotherapy was designed to put the brakes on her disease while she anxiously waited for the only thing that would give her a shot at life – a bone marrow transplant.

“The chemo made me so sick I couldn’t eat and my weight dropped to 39 kilos,” she said.

“The doctors were really worried because I was so skinny and they had to tube feed me.

“I was told my chances of survival were about 15 per cent without the transplant, but received the devastating news that despite a worldwide search of 30 million donors there was no match.

“My last chance was my brother Aaron who lives in Malaysia. The odds he would be a match were infinitesimally small but, after an agonising 10 weeks, we found out he was. I just cried and cried and cried.”

Aaron said: “I was willing to do anything to help my sister and was thrilled to find I was a match.

“I had thought they would drill into my bones but donating bone marrow is no different to donating blood as the stem cells are extracted from the blood.

“It couldn’t be easier and it saved my sister’s life.”

Sharon and Aaron underwent the transplant in Royal North Shore in March 2017 and, having now passed the crucial first anniversary, her chances of survival are now up to 80 per cent.

With children then aged 15-20, people had tried to comfort her with the thought that her kids were on the way to adulthood and would continue to flourish even if she was not around to see it.

“They didn’t understand,” she said. “It was like planting a seed in the garden – you want to see it flower, and I wanted to be here to see my children blossom and flower.”

Now Sharon is determined to give back. She appears in a new online video (<http://www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/nutrition-talks>) – the brainchild of Royal North Shore dietitians – to help cancer patients at risk of malnutrition because they are unable to eat; and wants everyone to sign up to be a blood donor.

“Blood donors really do save lives – I needed blood transfusions virtually every day just to stay alive. Donors literally gave me the gift of life. It’s as simple as that, and I will be forever grateful,” she said.

Sharon’s doctor William Stevenson, a haematologist based at Royal North Shore, supported Sharon’s call for more people to donate blood.

“It’s easy, it’s minimally-invasive, and Sharon’s story shows how important it is that people donate blood and, if suitable, agree to go on the Australian Bone Marrow Registry,” Dr Stevenson said.