

# Cancer patient, 10, has a reason to celebrate this Christmas

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quality of life,” Heather recalled. “That was the best they could offer. She would never be cancer-free again.”

That meant another Christmas at Sick Kids last year for Kathryn and more punishing chemotherapy, to the point of using up her lifetime limit of the drug.

Yet in February, a routine scan revealed that the lesions had disappeared and her cancer was in remission. The doctors were thrilled as they delivered the results. Heather calls it a miracle and can’t thank Sick Kids enough.

“Kathryn’s been through so much and neuroblastoma is such a challenging disease to treat,” said Dr. Meredith Irwin, a pediatric oncologist and researcher for the past 18 years at Sick Kids.

“It’s so difficult to treat when it metastasizes and it’s even harder to treat the second time around, so yes, it’s great that her response to the treatment was as positive as it was. We’ll still continue to monitor her and with every year that goes by, you get a little more comfortable.



It will be a very special Christmas in the Stewart house this year as daughter Kathryn, 10, (left) and brother Jeff, 7, will be celebrating together for the first time in nearly six years. Cancer patient Kathryn, who suffers from neuroblastoma, was told earlier this year her cancer is now in remission—thrilling her doctors and family. Photo by Eamonn Maher

It’ll be many years until she gets a clean bill of health.”

Dr. Irwin explained that neuroblastoma is the third-most common

form of cancer amongst children and only about half of its patients are long-term survivors.

After her relapse last year, Kath-

ryn was able to get access to what’s considered cutting-edge treatments called immune therapy, in which the body’s immune system is stimulated, and Dr. Irwin said that new research is showing positive effects in eliminating neuroblastoma tumours.

“The access to medical care that we have is unbelievable because when you see what people I know who are in the U.S. have to deal with, we’re blessed to have something like Sick Kids available,” added Heather.

“We can’t even begin to comprehend how lucky we are.”

Kathryn, who’ll move on to Centennial Middle School next year, was named the Georgetown Soccer Club’s Stephen Lee Award recipient for the under-10 girls’ division this past summer for her enthusiasm and participation on the pitch as a defender and sometimes goalie.

She’s also in a competition with brother Jeff to see who’ll miss the fewest number of days at school this year.

“In Grade 2, I missed 115 days,” she said.

“This year, I’m winning.”

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