

## Catalina Rodriguez



I was diagnosed with Leukemia (ALL) in March 2006. How it started is like this. I was feeling very tired and sick. I thought I had a sinus infection that would not go away. On top of all that, I also had a fever. My PCP had blood work ordered to determine the cause of my illness. In addition to that, I was told by a cardiac specialist I had thrombosis. A few days later my doctor telephoned me and told me to go to the emergency room immediately. She said that my white blood cell count was off the charts and it was probably Leukemia. I was hospitalized at

Houston Northwest Medical Center where I received my first chemo treatment for one week. After this treatment I was sent to a recovery facility for two weeks. The doctor at Houston Northwest informed me that because the Philadelphia test was positive my only option was to go the M D Anderson for a “study medicine”. This “study” was the only way I could receive treatment and the medicine to help my Leukemia, since my insurance would not approve payment for the medication.

I started treatment at M D Anderson and received 6 chemo treatments being hospitalized each time for one week at a time. Needless to say, the chemo treatments ravage the body and the secondary effects are devastating.

Since my diagnosis, I was forced to stop working and had to take a sick leave of absence as I became incapacitated. Walking is very difficult. I get around with the aid of a walker and have lost dexterity in my hands. I now rely on my sisters to help me in and out of the shower, prepare my meals, do my laundry and drive me a necessary. Without their help I don't know where I would be.

On May 17 (my birthday) of this year, I was hospitalized at M D Anderson once again for pneumonia and blood clots that had formed in my central line. At that time, I was told that I had a new form of Leukemia. I currently have CMML. I was told that my only chance of survival was a bone marrow transplant. Let me add the reason the doctors have not proceeded with the transplant prior to this was because they believed I might not survive the transplant. Since this is my only option now, I have decided to go forward with the bone marrow transplant. My faith in God is strong enough that I know He will bring me through all this. Case in point, He brought you, Bright Light to me.

My disability at work is now at an end and my biggest fear is loosing my home due to the lack of income. The last thing I want to be is a burden to my daughter.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Bright Light for allowing me to tell my story.

Thank you,  
Catalina Rodriguez