

I am here today because of the ONJ Centre and the exceptional care nurses gave me and my family.

Please show your support this Christmas.



November 2018

Dear Friend,

I believe I am very lucky. I have a beautiful wife, Julia, two wonderful and loving children, Charlie who is five and Audrey who is three, and I have survived cancer... twice.

I believe I am very lucky because I was in the best place with the best nurses and medical teams you could wish for; professional yet compassionate people who did everything they could to take care of me and my family.

You know the place... because as the staff there say, you are the heart of the ONJ Centre.

As you are the heart, I see the nurses as the soul. Which is why I am personally writing to you. I want you to join with me and show your support for every nurse at the ONJ Centre and all they do to help patients just like me on their journey with cancer.

Cancer like leukaemia... Leukaemia is one of those sicknesses that you hear about. You know it's terrible, but you don't really understand how bad it can be.

I had always felt good, but after having surgery on my knee I started to feel awful. Within a matter of months, I was so sick I had no choice but to go to the doctor and get blood tests done.

I remember it was a Saturday night when we got the call. We were enjoying a quiet night at home when Julia received the call about my blood test results. I had the blood tests done that morning. **Deep down I knew when I did the test that something was definitely wrong with me.** My white cell count was very high while my red cell count was so bad, I could have had a stroke.

In a daze we got ready and found ourselves at the ONJ Centre that very same night.

When I got here the staff said that if I get past the first week then I have a chance.

A chance...



I can't begin to tell you how scared Julia and I were when we were told that.

I was at the ONJ Centre for six weeks. I started chemotherapy on the third day. There was some trouble with my IV-line because I was anaemic, and I was bleeding. They tried to give me platelets to help my blood cells.

Because I was bleeding the nurses had to constantly change my dressing. I will never forget one of the nurses was crying as she was changing the dressing. **She was so gentle and caring, trying very hard to change the dressing but my skin was just coming off with it.** She just wanted to do the very best for me, to make sure that I was comfortable and that my dressing was clean.

I was told that if I can survive the first round, then I'd have a chance for another round of treatment. I was extremely sick. In the first week, I will never forget it, I called Julia. I was struggling with what was going on. I was so very tired, it felt like nothing was working for me.

Every nurse at the ONJ Centre is an angel. They wanted me to get better, to get back home to my wife and children. They were not giving up on me.

It was really touch and go but every nurse and every doctor had a really positive outlook, and slowly but surely, the chemotherapy began to work.

The staff took us in like family. I had a rule that there was only to be jokes and laughter in my room. All the nurses made jokes to keep my spirits up. And because they couldn't say my name they all begun to call me "G". (By the way Guillaume is William in French!)

The nurses would bring in blankets and place them on the floor so Audrey could play, or they would hold her while Julia and I spent some time together. They would heat up her bottles, they would take a nappy away. They gave Charlie plastic gloves to play with to pretend he was a doctor and would invite him to "help them out" with their duties.



Going through treatment at the ONJ Centre with my wife by my side.

The nurses just did those little things that made our lives so much easier. They would always talk to us, ask us how we were doing, and would have a joke to lighten up what was a very difficult time in our lives.

For Julia, the nurses kept up her strength. Some days were really bad for me, and I just didn't have the energy to talk with her. But the nurses would chat away with her, reassuring her that everything would be okay. They encouraged her to call them any time to check and see how I was doing. And they would inform Julia if I was having a really bad day.

Finally, after six hard long weeks, I was able to go home... for just one week before beginning Round 2 of treatment.

I felt wonderful. Not only because I was home, but I was told that the chemotherapy and other treatments I was on had cleared up the leukaemia. It was gone! I was in remission!

I was ready for Round 2 of treatments...

Well, I thought I was ready but Round 2 took a lot more out of me. Doctors had warned that the side-effects would be compounded because of the toxicity from treatment, that I would hit a wall of fatigue, that my fighting spirit would diminish.

And exactly what they said would happen, did happen.

At the end of the second round I asked the doctors to stop treatment. Unfortunately, the side effects were really bad. In between two of the treatments the cancer came back, not badly but staff could see some cancer cells.

After six months of treatment I had a break. I was tired. I had gone through so much. Every part of me was sore. But what kept me going was I had three very special wishes I needed to fulfil, three special wishes every nurse at the ONJ Centre was helping me with:

My first wish - *to see my daughter celebrate her first birthday.*

My second wish - *to celebrate Charlie turning four.*

My third wish - *to spend Christmas at home, with my family.*

This is why I write to you, to ask you to give generously to help the nurses at the ONJ Centre.

Christmas should be a time to be home with family. I wanted nothing more than to watch my children squeal with joy at the thought Santa had come to visit them, to see them unwrap their gifts and to all sit down and enjoy some laughter, happiness and lots of good food.

I wasn't sure if I would get home for Christmas, but I do know that the nurses at the ONJ Centre give up their Christmas Day every year to care for patients just like me, to provide some Christmas cheer to patients who are too sick to go home, even just for the day.

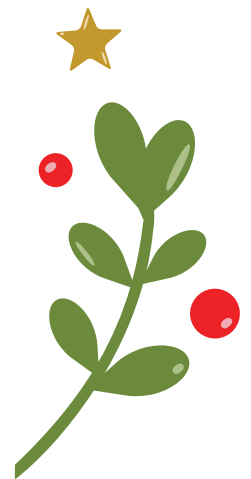
Every nurse has made the ONJ Centre feel like it is a second home. They embrace us like we are family. They make Christmas that little bit more special as they share the food they bring in and some even dress up in Santa or Christmas costumes.

More so, they just radiate with their positive attitudes and big beautiful smiles, making our day that little bit brighter.

I was in the best place to grant me my wishes, because you helped make this Centre a leader in providing the very best care for patients just like me.

Every one of them worked really hard along with the doctors to get me back home for Christmas. In fact, I could talk for days about how well they looked after me. They went above and beyond what Julia and I expected.

Their dedication is truly amazing.



The nurses were wonderful and did all they could to brighten my day.

Your donation will help these wonderful nurses who looked after me and my family, and the countless patients who will need the ONJ Centre.

Your donation will help the nurses to do even more for patients, to provide them with the very best treatments, wellness and supportive care they need. And your donation will help nurses continue to provide exceptional care so patients win over cancer, especially over the holiday season and into the New Year.

I was one of the lucky ones who could go home for Christmas. But it was thanks to the nurses who did all they could to get me well enough to go home.

Please, I ask you to give in support of these wonderful and dedicated nurses who do so much for every patient at the ONJ Centre.

I am eternally grateful to every person who cared for me at the ONJ Centre. To me, there is no other place like the ONJ Centre.

Please give today. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Guillaume Zigan

Guillaume Zigan
Patient, Survivor & Donor to the ONJ Centre

P.S. My story is just one of hundreds of stories of patients at the ONJ Centre. But my story is possible because of the dedication and commitment of the nurses and the staff at the ONJ Centre. Please give a donation and show your support for the nurses at the ONJ Centre. Thank you.

P.P.S. I am looking forward to spending this Christmas at home with my family. **Today I am in remission because of the care I received at the ONJ Centre.** From my family to yours, we wish you a very happy Christmas and Holiday Season. Good health to you now and always.

Thank you!



I got to spend Christmas at home with my family because of the ONJ Centre nurses.