

□ Tom and Sarah Tilbury with their son Oliver earlier this year. Sarah and Tom will leave for Chicago on Friday, where Sarah will undergo at least two months of a life-changing treatment to slow down and possibly halt her MS as well as giving her the chance to repair some of the damage already done.

"HELLO Sunshine" is the inspiring story of SE local Sarah Tilbury's battle with Multiple Sclerosis.

Wanting to make people not only aware of her battle, but of Multiple Sclerosis in general, Sarah and husband Tom decided to make a short clip of photos which explained what Sarah had been through over the past few years.

"The Youtube came from wanting to tell people, without actually telling people," Sarah said.

The 26-year-old first started experiencing symptoms of MS in 2012; she was dizzy, fatigued, had migraines, double vision and temporary vision loss, heat intolerance and ataxia, to name a few.

At the time she had an MRI scan which proved inconclusive.

In 2013, Sarah relapsed which led to a subsequent MRI, which indicated demyelination (damage to the myelin sheath around one's nerves).

In June, 2013, Sarah and Tom found out they were having their first baby - Sarah had a very happy and healthy pregnancy.

"Parenthood is the best thing I have ever done," Sarah said.

After Oliver was born, Sarah underwent another MRI while she was in hospital where she was diagnosed with Relapsing Remitting Multiple Sclerosis. "The diagnosis was tough to hear," Sarah said. "My sister was in the room with me and Oliver was asleep in the cot next to my bed.

"I remember my neurologist telling me not to get too emotional about it and that I barely had enough lesions to diagnosis MS."

Sarah remembers telling Tom was heartbreaking, the couple had just given birth to a healthy baby boy and had recently started building their dream home.

"Our future suddenly seemed so different," she said.

Sarah sees herself as a very independent and strong woman, and to now be faced with a chronic illness was hard. It meant a lot of things would now be out of her control.

"Chronic illnesses don't always present in the physical," she said. "And even when I am having real difficulties I don't let on."

On the outside it was hard for people to understand what Sarah and her family were dealing with, which has led them to focus on educating people on MS.

On Friday, Sarah and Tom will be leaving for Chicago, where Sarah has been accepted into a treatment program at the Northwestern University Hospital.

Sarah will undergo HSCT - Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant - with world-renowned Dr Richard Burt.

The treatment is FDA-approved in America and will be a fully approved treatment therapy by 2022.

HSCT is the transplantation of multipotent hematopoietic stem cells, usually derived from bone marrow, peripheral blood, or umbilical cord blood.

Ultimately the treatment aims to build Sarah a new immune system through an intense treatment which includes chemotherapy.

The hope is that this new immune system will be created without MS.

Sarah said this was the only type of treatment that has been proven to halt further progression of MS, and often reverse previous damage as well.

"I've been through my medical history with Dr Burt and he believes I am a good candidate," Sarah said.

"I have a lot of tests and protocols to go through before treatment.

"But (Dr Burt) is so lovely, I was fortunate to talk to him over the phone, it's such an honour."

Sarah first heard about this treatment and Dr Burt when she saw Kristy Cruise's story of her battle with MS on 60 minutes.

This has helped Sarah to put her story out there - which has received a wonderful reaction from the local Robe community, as well as other SE communities.

Sarah and Tom will be in America for at least two months, with Oliver staying with Sarah's parents while they are away.

"It's unimaginable being away from Oliver," Sarah said.

"I'm going to be really really sick though, we will miss him, it will be hard but it's something we have to do.

"(But) it's also really exciting, your health and well-being is so valuable this treatment will change everything."

The life-changing treatment is aimed at allowing Sarah to get her health back and be a strong mum for Oliver: "He's the reason I am doing this," she said.

The treatment itself is \$140,000 Australian, plus flights, plus accommodation for two and a half months, plus medication - a rough tally of costs is \$200,000.

If you would like to help Sarah visit www.gofundme.com/hellosunshine, or Holiday is currently having a raffle with a \$1000 summer wardrobe up for grabs - head over to Holiday's Facebook page for more details or head in store.

On November 8, Sails at Robe will be holding a banquet dinner and a vintage fashion parade at the Robe Football Club with proceeds going to Hello Sunshine.

Tickets are \$40 per person and can be brought from Sails, Pizza Project or Second Chance.

For more information on HSCT visit www.movingmountains2013.com/about-kristy/autologous-hsct/.

Sarah and Tom thanked the local community for all their donations and support.

"We very much appreciate it, the local community has been amazing," Sarah said. "We feel so supported, it's really nice, thank you to everyone in the SE and Robe community."



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