

'I can look forward to Christmas knowing that I am no longer dying'

Independent.ie helped Marina Jordan Killoran raise over €160,000 in last-ditch online appeal



Marina and Alan Killoran with Dog Bailey in their home in Newbridge.

Cathal McMahon
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A mother who travelled to Chicago for life-saving treatment after funds were raised through an online campaign has revealed that her condition has dramatically improved.

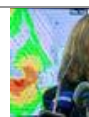
Marina Jordan Killoran (46), who suffers from an incurable auto-immune disease called Systemic Scleroderm, received a stem-cell transplant that isn't available in Ireland over the summer.

The mum-of-two travelled to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in the US with her husband Alan in July after over €160,000 was raised in order to receive the treatment.

Speaking to Independent.ie Marina explained that she never thought she would see 2017.

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"I can look forward to Christmas knowing that I am no longer dying, I am getting better. I have a future with my family," she said.

Marina, who is originally from Tallaght but living in Newbridge, Co Kildare, rose to national attention last March when she issued a heartfelt plea for help raising over €100k for the life saving treatment.



Marina and Alan Killoran with Dog Bailey in their home in Newbridge.

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Many heard her call and the cash was raised online in the space of a few short weeks.

Marina travelled to Chicago with her husband Alan in the summer but they were lucky to get the treatment.

Speaking at her home in Newbridge, Marina explained: “Just after the interview with Independent.ie my right knee got so bad with calcinosis that it swelled up. It was so bad that I couldn't walk. By the time I got to Chicago I was in a wheelchair.

“I arrived into the hospital in Chicago and Dr Richard Burt took one look at me and one look at my knee and his face just dropped. He was in two minds.

“At that point I was not going back, I knew time was ticking. This was my last chance,

She explained: “Had I been going over in June for the assessment rather than the surgery with my leg like that then there is no way it would have gone ahead.

“I got in by the skin of my teeth, it is just by the goodness and kindness of the people in Ireland that I am alive today.”

Marina spent several weeks undergoing painful chemotherapy before the stem cell transplant.

The mother-of-two explained that it wasn't the dramatic overnight experience many might have believed it would be.

Instead, it has been a slow process where gradually she is improving every day.

“The recovery is slow because there was a lot of damage done to me. It is going to take time.

"My breathing is so much better. My lung function is great, I still have scar tissue but I can breathe comfortably now

“My persistent cough is gone, I used to struggle to sleep. It was very hard for me to swallow food before but that is now better.”

Her calcinosis, which almost threatened to scupper the whole operation, is now vastly improved. She shows how it has almost disappeared on her left wrist while it is receding on her right wrist.

“There was an awful lot of damage done to me. I was at the point where my body was turning to stone.

“All that was happening to me was that I was getting worse, I knew I didn't have long to live.

She said: “It's fascinating to watch and see your body over time improve and repair itself.

“My bloods are good, all the signs are there that I am in remission.

“In my opinion I am in remission but I haven't seen my consultants here.”

She now no longer needs a wheelchair but is still using crutches. Her drug dosages have also dramatically reduced. “I'm on anti-virals. I'm only 7.5mg of steroids now at one

point I was on 40-60mg.

“I was on 2g of cellcept , I am now on 1g and I will be weaned off that.”

Marina said that she and her husband Alan will spend Christmas with their daughters Shannon (21) and Erin (18).

It won't be a big event but just getting to December 25, 2016 is a miracle in itself.

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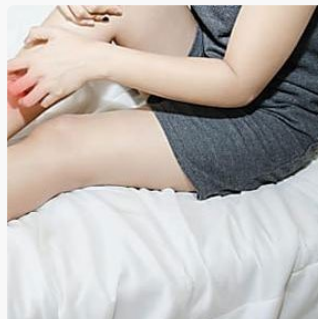
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