

Combat medic takes first step in battle to beat illness

Thursday 1st August 2013

By Tina Robins

FORMER army medic Katrina Brown is heading out to America this autumn on the first step of her battle to beat a fatal condition.

Katrina, who lives with her soldier husband Martin at South Cerney, is struggling to raise over £100,000 to pay for lifesaving treatment in America.

So far almost £20,000 has been raised by family, friends and supporters, including the Standard readers. It means doctors in Chicago will be able to carry out vital tests to see how far her systemic sclerosis has progressed and how much time she has before it is too late for treatment.

"I'm nervous and excited at the same time," she said this week.

Katrina, who was told she had been exposed to depleted uranium during a three-month posting to a military hospital in Iraq ten years ago, was advised the window of opportunity was likely to close in November, four years after her condition was first diagnosed.

Systemic sclerosis is an autoimmune disease that attacks internal organs. A treatment that involves wiping out her immune system with chemotherapy and rebooting it with her own stem cells, is available in America but not on the NHS in the UK.



Former army combat medic Katrina Brown who is fighting systemic sclerosis

However it has risks attached and rigorous tests in October will show whether Katrina, 30, is strong enough to withstand it.

She suffered an emotional knock back last month when patient she had been talking to on Facebook died following treatment, but she was boosted by the survival of another woman who had lived with the condition for 17 years.

"If I go out there and they say: 'You're too late,' at least then we won't waste time raising the rest of the money," she said.

In the meantime fellow service wives at 29 Regt, family and friends are still working to raise the cash. Husband Martin and colleagues ran five half marathons in five days raising several hundred pounds and a school in Manchester boosted the appeal fund by £2,000 with a talent show.

Fundraisers also will be manning a book stall during the Gloucestershire Steam Extravaganza on South Cerney airfield this weekend.

Visit <http://www.gofundme.com/2jtkd0> to donate to Katrina's Stem Cell Fund.