

Soldier goes to US for life-saving op

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By Katie Fitzpatrick

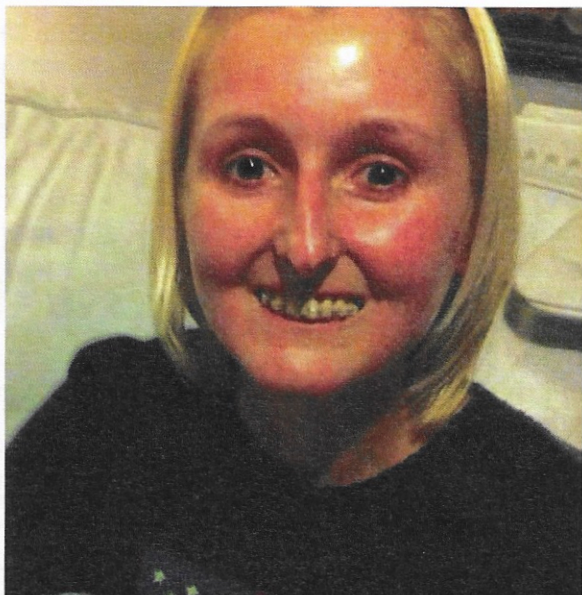
Katrina Brown faces a race against time to beat a rare auto-immune disease she says is linked to radioactive uranium exposure in Iraq.



Katrina Brown in Iraq in 2003

“The best possible outcome would be finding out that my condition hasn’t deteriorated too far.”

Dedicated supporters have organised a series of events including car washes and cake sales to raise the cash needed to send Katrina to the States.



Katrina Brown

“They could be the beginning of something great or bad. By going to America, I will find out one way or another.”

For information visit [Facebook.com/Katrinastemcellfund](https://www.facebook.com/Katrinastemcellfund)

A former soldier who developed a deadly illness while serving her country is heading to America for pioneering treatment.

Katrina Brown faces a race against time to beat a rare auto-immune disease she says is linked to radioactive uranium exposure in Iraq.

The condition, diagnosed in 2008, is attacking her major organs and needs to be treated within the first five years.

She will fly out in October after family and friends raised the £21,000 needed for tests.

They will show if she is eligible for a life-saving stem cell transplant – currently not available in this country. Katrina, 31, a former Army medic, from Swinton, said: “It feels great to have raised this money for the tests. I just want to get out there now.

Her fund also received a £500 boost on Sunday after the Salford Lions service organisation held a fun day in the town.

Katrina, who was at the event with her family, said: “The Lions got in touch with me to say they were hosting this event – it was really unexpected.

“I got the chance to meet them all and I was told that other branches of the Lions want to raise funds for me.”

She has also been supported by military charity Help for Heroes, which has paid for flights and accommodation for her and her husband Martin.

But the former Moorside High School pupil will need to another £80,000 if she is suitable for the stem cell treatment in Chicago. The transplant will reboot her immune system to fight back against the systemic sclerosis. Katrina believes she developed the illness after a 2003 tour of duty in Basra.

She was handed a card before flying home warning she had been in contact with radioactive materials.

Katrina, who now lives in Gloucestershire and hopes to one day work for the ambulance service, said: “I am excited about the tests, but also scared.