

New Year boost for army medic Katrina's lifesaving appeal

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ONLY three months after launching a desperate appeal combat medic Katrina Brown is less than £30,000 away from her £90,000 target for lifesaving treatment.

Supporters from all over the country as well as Standard readers started raising cash as fast as they could after the 31-year-old from South Cerney revealed in October it was a matter of weeks before it would be too late for her systemic sclerosis to be treated.

"It's brilliant," said Katrina, who was exposed to depleted uranium when she served in Iraq ten years ago. "It was a great start to the New Year. I couldn't believe it when we were starting to add up the figures that are coming in."

She said taking into account all the money due to come in from fundraising events meant just over £28,000 still needed to be raised.

The treatment, which uses her own stem cells to reboot her immune system, is not available in the UK on the NHS and Katrina had to raise £20,000 just to pay for tests during October in Chicago where expert Dr Richard Burt works.

He warned her that her heart had already been affected by the condition, which hardens skin and organs, and advised her that time was of the essence.

It meant Katrina had to raise another £90,000 as a matter of urgency.

"When I came back from America I was thinking it was such a short space of time to raise a huge amount of money and I didn't know how we were going to do it," she told the Standard this week.

But donations have been pouring in and dozens of fundraising efforts have been organised, including a Halloween ball in Cirencester, a saucy calendar featuring Katrina's ex-army buddies, marathon runs, cycle rides and hikes and sales of wristbands.

"Realistically, we're looking at the end of February if it continues the way it has been since October," she said. "It seemed like it was so far away and all of a sudden I'm thinking about actually getting things sorted for when I'm away."

She paid tribute to the hundreds of friends and supporters in the area and around the UK who had helped so far.

"We just need to think of some more fundraising ideas now," she added.

Katrina is currently planning a fundraising day at Tetbury Tesco.

Visit katrinastemcellfund.org for more information and to donate online. Cheques can also be made out to Katrina's Stem Cell Fund.