

Army medic exposed to uranium in Iraq faces race against time to raise remaining £25,000 for life-saving treatment

- Katrina Brown, 31, developed a rare and potentially fatal autoimmune disease after being exposed to uranium near Basra in 2003
- Life-saving treatment is not available in the UK - she can have it in the U.S but it costs £100,000 and she will have to pay for it herself
- She has raised £75,000 already but her health is deteriorating so she is running out of time to raise the final £25,000
- She has had to book it before it is too late - but it won't be able to go ahead unless she raises the remaining money in just a few weeks

By Emma Innes

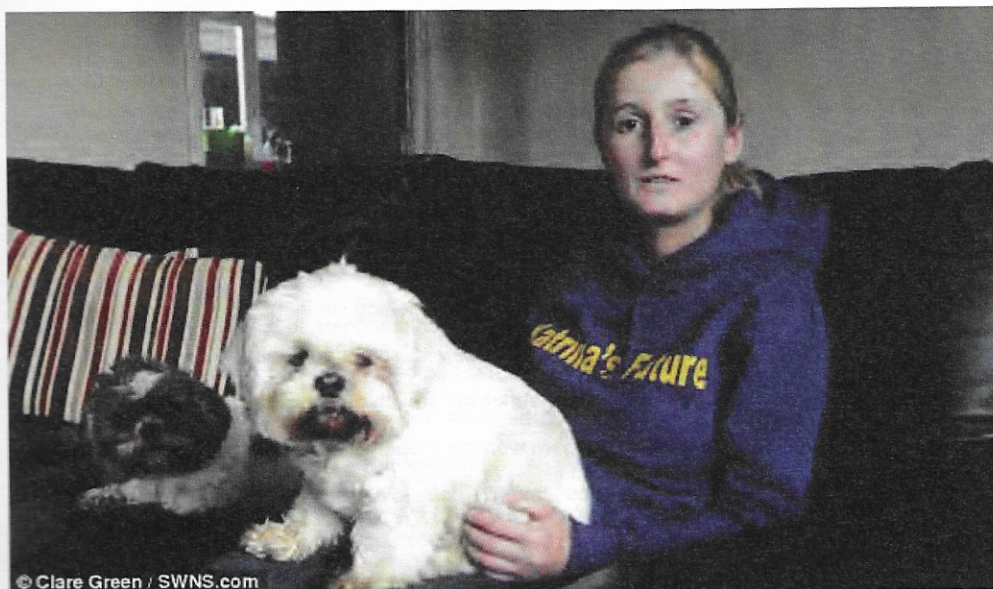
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An army medic who developed a potentially fatal illness after being exposed to uranium in Iraq has just weeks left to raise the £100,000 she needs to pay for life-saving treatment.

Katrina Brown, 31, was exposed to depleted uranium while treating injured comrades at a field hospital in 2003.

After years of failing health she was diagnosed with a debilitating immune disorder which is so rare that neither the NHS nor the MoD offer life-saving treat sufferers.

Doctors in America told the army wife she could have pioneering treatment in Chicago to reboot her immune system, but the life-saving procedure would cost a whopping £100,000.



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Katrina Brown developed an autoimmune disease after being exposed to uranium in Iraq in 2003. Life-saving treatment is not available in the UK so she is having to raise £100,000 to pay for treatment in the U.S.

Mrs Brown has been forced to book the stem cell procedure for next month despite still needing to raise the final £25,000 because doctors have told her time is running out.

Mrs Brown, from South Cerney, Gloucestershire, said: 'It is not as if I'm asking for something like a swim with the dolphins to make me happy.'

'I am going to die without this treatment.

'I've got to the point where I am about £25,000 short of the target but have gone for it.

'It's sort of now or never anyway, because I've been told it will be too late for treatment if it's left any longer.

'I've booked the treatment, although I have not paid for it.'

She added: 'It involves taking my stem cells and giving them a massive blast of chemotherapy, and then replacing them and sort of tricking the immune system into thinking there is nothing wrong, like a reboot of the whole thing.



She has already raised £75,000 but is running out of time to raise the remaining £25,000 because her health is deteriorating

'It can potentially kill me - I'll be left with literally no immune system. I know that, but I don't have much choice.

'But I've seen the other people who've had what I have and they've had the treatment, and they are a real inspiration. It's a recognised treatment over there, which the medical insurers in America are prepared to pay for.'

Mrs Brown thinks she was exposed to the highly poisonous material - used to increase the penetrative power of bombs and bullets - when she was sent to a derelict airstrip called Shaibah, seven miles from Basra.

It contained dumped tanks blown up by uranium-enhanced weapons in the 1991 war.

Before flying home she was handed a white plastic card by Army officials saying she could have been exposed to dust containing depleted uranium during her deployment and should inform her GP.

But the young medic feared it would be put on her medical records and could possibly stop her getting life insurance or a mortgage.

Four years later, she visited her doctors because she was feeling constantly cold and numb, with aches and pains all over her body.

She was diagnosed with systemic sclerosis - the rare autoimmune disorder causes abnormal growth of the connective tissue.

This causes vascular damage and hardening of the internal organs, preventing them working properly.

Symptoms include dry skin, swelling of the fingers and toes, tiredness, weight loss, muscle pain, joint pain, heartburn, bloating, coughing, dizziness and breathlessness.

Mrs Brown said: 'Since I was diagnosed, everything's been a battle - as well as battling the illness I've been fighting to try and access the right treatment.

'Now we've been offered this ray of light but obviously we need help to raise the money.

'I've lost about 90 per cent of my mobility and the longer I live with the illness, the more I'm deteriorating physically, but I know I can't give up.'

Mrs Brown travelled to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago - the world's leading treatment centre which is filled with U.S. Army veterans - in October 2012.



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Mrs Brown needs treatment which would see her stem cells blasted with chemotherapy to reboot her immune system by tricking her body into thinking she is well. Without it she will not survive

Doctors told her the condition would eventually kill - probably in around a year - unless she has the £100,000 treatment which would see her stem cells blasted with chemotherapy to reboot her immune system by tricking her body into thinking she is well.

Her family, friends and husband, Martin, have raised around £75,000 - but desperately need the final cash before time runs out.

She said: 'It took a year before that to raise the £20,000 to get me to Chicago and have the tests in the first place, so I didn't think it was possible to raise £100,000.

'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.

'I wasn't expecting this kind of response at all, it's overwhelming and amazing.'

She is planning to open a pop-up shop to sell some her belongings to trying and reach her final goal.

'I am literally going to sell everything I own,' she said.

To donate cash, visit: www.katrinasthefuture.org

- *An earlier version of this article said that Help for Heroes had 'snubbed' Katrina Brown. The charity has asked us to point out that they are providing all flights and accommodation in relation to her treatment and we are happy to clarify this.*

Read more:

- [Katrina's Future](#)

Find this story at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2539982/Army-medic-exposed-uranium-race-raise-25-000-treatment.html>

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