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Lupus Survivors Return To Northwestern Memorial

Less than a year ago, 21-year-old Corrina Vigil was bedridden and dying from lupus. Recently, she and 22 other lupus survivors traveled from around the country to Northwestern Memorial to celebrate a second chance at life. "I was fortunate enough to be one of a very few to undergo this adult stem cell transplant that has allowed the lupus to go into clinical remission and give me a chance at a new kidney and life," she says.



Dr. Ann Traynor (r) visits with Lupus survivor Corrina Vigil.

Doctors at Northwestern Memorial are pioneers in the field of adult stem cell transplants for autoimmune diseases. The country's first transplant for lupus was performed at the hospital seven years ago, and the success with these patients has led to using stem cell transplants for other autoimmune diseases, including, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease and multiple sclerosis. "The idea is to harvest some of the patients' own stem cells from their blood, deliberately destroy the immune system with chemotherapy and then re-implant the patients 'cleansed' stem cells and hope they will multiply into a healthy immune system," says [Dr. Richard Burt](#), chief, Immunotherapy for Autoimmune Diseases at Northwestern Memorial.

"The idea is that if you turn back the clock and let the immune system heal itself, the patient should have a chance of ending up without the disease," says [Ann Traynor, MD](#), Immunotherapy for Autoimmune Diseases, Northwestern Memorial.

Lupus is an autoimmune inflammatory disease that results when disease-fighting cells in the body create antibodies directed against its own cells and tissues. The immune cells attack the individual's own organs in the manner that immune cells normally reject only foreign organisms, tumors or grafts. This process can lead to destruction of the normal kidney, heart, brain, spine and lung tissue.

Survivors returning to the reunion were thrilled to show off their progress to their caregivers at Northwestern Memorial. "Here I am starting all over again with a new outlook that has been shared with

many others," says Corrina. "I look like and feel like a new person."

For referral to a Northwestern Memorial physician, call 1.877.926.4664 or [click here](#).

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