

“Defeating Death”

Shane Varga Update – August 21st, 2011

Someone who didn't know my situation sent me a message the other day. It read “Hey Shane, what have you been up to lately?” It made me reflect on the past 3 weeks of my life and all that kept coming to mind was that I literally just beat death. As a scientific fact, I would have died in a short amount of time if I was not given back my own stem cells to repopulate my blood and immune cells. The amount of effort, support, and strength it took to get through the transplant was every bit as difficult as defeating death itself. It was no easy journey, it was no fun, but I made it through a better, stronger man... AGAIN.

Before I go any further I want to share a few things about the transplant. I am not going to go into the bad parts because there is just no point to dwell on the negative. What I will share is that as strong as I was mentally going into this, several times it got so bad that I doubted my ability and mental toughness to make it through. That really shocked me. There was a 3 day stretch in which things were so bad that I had to meditate at least 2/3 of the day to make it through the pain and discomfort. It was truly no joke in there. That is all I will say about that.

The other things I wanted to share are more uplifting. I never really complained much given the circumstances. I am proud that no matter how bad things got I stayed optimistic, made friends with all the staff, and kept a positive attitude throughout the entire time. Yes, I had my doubts about making it but it was my attitude that pulled me through. My determination allowed me to have a few 20 minute workout sessions when most people would be bedridden. My nurses kept telling me my actions didn't match my vital counts. This goes to show that circumstances are only as powerful as you allow. I think this is a good lesson. No matter how bad things get, stay positive and eventually you will pull through. If you allow yourself to be negative, it will take that much longer to pull yourself out of a bad situation.

Finally, I want to add that I was only one day off from the prediction of my last entry before my transplant. I predicted getting out on August 7th and ironically that is the day my counts were good enough to go home. Unfortunately, they keep you at least another day to make sure the increase was not a false positive. In addition to my goal of getting out faster than usual, I also wanted to accomplish what should not be possible. As you know that is my thing. I asked one nurse that worked the transplant area for 29 years “what are some things you have never seen done by a transplant patient before?” One item from her list was seeing someone go through the transplant process and not need a blood transfusion. That was it, this would be my goal and every night I envisioned my Hemoglobin counts not being reduced and not needing a transfusion. I made it through the whole time without needing blood. This is not unheard of, but it is not very common at all.

Here is why accomplishing that feat is so important to me. I had 4 different doctors, and almost every nurse tell me that I would 100% need a blood transfusion. A few weeks prior to my admission my sister offered to donate blood as we were a match. I had the transplant coordinator tell my sister she could not specifically donate blood to me. She explained “You would never be able to donate enough blood

for him as he will need multiple transfusions.” The point is, don’t ever let anyone give you news that discourages you from trying. There is always a first for everything, but you can’t be afraid to fail. We have power over our bodies whether we want to believe it or not. We can tear it down or build it up and it all depends on one HUGE factor, ATTITUDE. A positive attitude is needed to achieve those things that are most difficult.

I want to get to the major point now. The most important thing I gained from this whole experience is an affirmation of my faith. As I have said many times, I cannot guarantee there is a God or an afterlife. However, after my last month I am more convinced now than ever. My experience has really opened my eyes to some parallels. Jesus rose from the dead and essentially proved that death on Earth is not the final phase of life. By dying and coming back from the dead it proved two things. The first is that there has to be another level besides death. If this was not true how does one die and come back to life 3 days later? The second is that death has no power over our lives. Death can obviously be overcome as Jesus proved. Jesus is also not the only person to be pronounced dead and be brought back to life. Medically we hear about this from time to time. I believe I can now relate to this.

It is a fact that I would have died if it was not for my own stem cells being reintroduced into my body. In my opinion that is defeating death. For 6 days I was a dead man walking. My vital counts were getting lower every day and at one point I no longer had an immune system. For one thing, this just amazes me about the resilience of the human body, but on another level it was very spiritual to me. My body was basically dead at one point, and then began to regenerate itself after the transplant and gave me new life. Death could not seal the deal over my body. I think this is a miracle. Not the kind where a sea is parted, but still a miracle if you think about it. God gave someone the knowledge to create a stem cell transplant and in doing so gave the power to defeat death. Death then is not the end, and it has limited power over our lives. Whether or not mine gets cut short does not matter. Eternity is a lot longer than another 60 years of my life here on Earth and I am sure it will be a lot better in terms of happiness. I found myself waiting for one answer in the hospital... Was I counting down the time to a new life, or counting down the final hours of my life? What I didn’t realize is that I will always be waiting for my final and new life until my time here has ended. There is no point in spending our days in fear of death. When that time comes, only then will the true defeat and mockery of death finally occur. When our bodies expire on Earth we are rewarded with the best life we could ever ask for and it will last an eternity with no need ever again to distress about death.

I know that many of you reading this may not have a spiritual aspect to your life. There are probably a good amount that do not believe in spirituality at all. I am not writing this to judge or to persuade anyone to find God. That is a decision to be made by the individual. What this is about is my faith and that what I believe in has saved my life. I have to give credit where credit is due and there is no way I could have made it through this time and been given a new life without a higher power. This is why I am who I am. Thank you my God for my strength and my new life!