

A second chance for sister

Airdrie's Faith Wood aims to raise \$75,000

STACIE SNOW
Rocky View Publishing

Imagine being in such constant, excruciating pain that even a gentle breeze can make your skin feel like it's fire.

Think of what it would be like to be unable to drive your kids to sports or go for a picnic.

That is what Airdrie resident Faith Wood's twin sister deals with everyday.

"She is in pain everyday," Wood says of her sister Fern Kwantes. "It inhibits her from being able to go outside for long periods of time. She can't be there for her children and even walking is a painful task."

Since 2003, the Victoria, B.C. resident and mother of three has been in chronic pain, suffering from a rare condition called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy or RSD.

A progressive disease of the autonomic nervous system, RSD is characterized by constant and extremely intense pain. The disease is as common as MS but is much harder to diagnose.

"It is the equivalent of having all of your pain receptors permanently switched to 'on,'" said Wood.

Kwantes first showed symptoms when she noticed a bump on her knee. It took two years for doctors to diagnose her with RSD. The disease can result in complete loss of limb function; however Kwantes battles this symptom daily by spending painful hours working her limbs to keep as much muscle mass as possible.

Kwantes, 41, has been through years of painful treatments, one of which resulted in a disk in her back being torn; requiring surgery last year.

Last year she was told by doctors they had exhausted all known treatments to help her. But her husband Theo, children Zach, 19, Elise, 16 and Harrison, 14 along



THAT'S WHAT SISTERS ARE FOR - Airdrie resident Faith Wood (left) and Fern Kwantes are identical twin sisters, although the likeness isn't so obvious since Kwantes became sick with a debilitating nervous system disease. Wood is raising money so Kwantes can receive a desperately needed but risky treatment.

with sister are not giving up without a fight. Now, Kwantes' only chance for recovery is a Ketamine coma trial in Mexico.

She decided to attempt the experimental treatment as a last resort, and there is an 80 per cent chance of success.

"Eighty per cent is better than zero," said Wood. "Doctors here have given up on her so we have to believe that this will work and when it does all will be well."

The procedure includes putting Kwantes into a coma for five days using the drug Ketamine to reboot her nervous system. It is considered extremely dangerous. Although risky, the prognosis for those who successfully complete the trial

is very encouraging.

The use of Ketamine is banned in Canada and the United States.

Wood is appealing to Airdrie residents to help her ailing, identical twin sister raise \$75,000 to receive the ground breaking medical procedure.

"It has been so hard to see her going through this and not being able to help her so now that we know there is a treatment possibility, we can raise funds to help her get the treatment she so desperately needs," said Wood.

Wood has created Faith for Fern, an initiative aimed at getting her sister help. In order to progress onto the trial, she must raise \$75,000 in 120 days, which is \$858 a day or \$35 an hour.

"Her children have gotten used to not having their mother available to them," said Wood. "This disease is so hard to live

with that it has a very high rate of suicide. We don't want to lose her."

"I think we can make this work, because of the power of people. People here are very generous and they would like to give but they like to know who they are giving to. This is putting a face to the money you are giving. Please help this young mother care for her children again and get her life back."

Wood is asking for people to contribute \$35, or whatever they can afford.

"All you need to do is forego your Starbucks coffee for a month and that will give Fern one more hour," said Wood. "We are not asking for much and the reward is priceless."

To donate to Fern's cause, visit www.faithforfern.com

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