

Victoria woman is approved for experimental RSD treatment *But fund-raising goal has yet to be reached*

It's down to the wire for Fern Kwantes, the Victoria woman suffering from reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD).

RSD, also known as complex regional pain syndrome, is a progressive disease of the autonomic nervous system that has caused Kwantes constant and extreme pain for more than two years. Now, Kwantes has been approved for a treatment option for her debilitating disease – an experimental ketamine coma research trial, facilitated by renowned RSD specialist Dr. Anthony Kirkpatrick and only available in Mexico.

The Canadian woman recently returned from the first stages of treatment, involving 10-day stay at a facility in Tampa, Fla., where Kirkpatrick has his practice. While in Tampa, she underwent a battery of tests to determine if she was fit for the five-day coma treatment, as well as receiving a three-day escalating ketamine infusion. After successfully completing the tests, Kwantes has been given the go-ahead from the doctor and has been confirmed to start treatment Sept. 11 in Monterrey, Mexico.

Although the Victoria woman is thrilled for the chance to reduce or even eradicate her symptoms, she is still lacking all the funds necessary to make it happen. To that end, her twin sister, Faith Wood, of Alberta, is putting forth a concerted effort to reach the fund-raising goal set through the Faith for Fern initiative, which Wood set up earlier this year. The initiative has raised \$36,000 thus far, with \$10,000 of that going toward the Tampa ketamine trial. While Kwantes' medical costs in Tampa will be covered by B.C. Health, she still needs approximately \$20,000 to cover medical and other costs in Mexico, with the hospital in Monterrey requiring a pre-treatment deposit of \$32,000 US. However, at this point she and her family have tapped all their financial resources and she needs the public's help.

“My sister has run out of all options. This is her only chance now of recovery,” Wood said. “She is in constant pain and it is heartbreaking to see her this way.”

The journey for Kwantes, who is now in a wheelchair, will not be easy. Her condition is serious, much worse than originally expected, and the ketamine coma trial is not a guaranteed miracle. However, she has feelings of renewed hope, with all the support that has flowed in, much of it from people she has never even met.

In a recent letter to supporters, Kwantes expressed her gratitude.

“It is your prayers, financial support and love and compassion for me that has made this possible and I want to give all of you my heartfelt thanks!” she said. “I wouldn't have this chance without you.”

For Wood, seeing Kwantes' grit and stubbornness in the face of pain has made her all that much more determined to ensure her sister receives the medical treatment that could change her life.

“We’re almost there; we will reach our fundraising goal and Fern will go to Mexico,” Wood said. “We’re going to make it happen.”

For more information on the Faith for Fern initiative or to donate, visit:
www.faithforfern.com

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To arrange for interviews or for more information, contact Kirsty Young at kirsty.young@tinypr.ca or 403-703-0055, Faith Wood at 403-461-3498 or faith@imind.ca.