

Ewan's Diagnosis

6th September 2003

This is the story of how Ewan was diagnosed with Wilms Tumour. I am not a very good writer, but i will try to get across what we felt during this time.

Thursday 8th May 2003

Always starts of as just another day. I woke up early to go to a conference in Perth, Scotland about Sustainability within Scotland. Monica was heavily pregnant with our 2nd child and was really starting to feel the pregnancy.

I was just about to leave, but before I went I changed Ewan's nappy so that Monica could get a little bit longer in bed, and perhaps Ewan would go back to sleep.

I opened his nappy and saw blood with some greenish discharge. I did not know what to think. At first I spent most of my time persuading myself that he had a urinary infection, that was all it could be right? I phoned the Doctor and arranged an emergency appointment and decided not to go to the conference.

The appointment was at 10am so I hung around, drank more coffee and changed Ewan's nappy again. Less red this time, so it must be nothing serious, probably just the infection.

I went down for 10, late as per usual, and waited to see Dr Watt. I went in, told him what the story was and asked about urinary infections. Dr Watt didn't seemed convinced and asked to examine Ewan. He lay on the table and let the doctor feel around his tummy, curious as to what this man was up to. Dr Watt did not look to happy. He told me he could feel a slight swelling on Ewan's left kidney, and he needed to be referred to the local hospital for further investigation.

Dr Watt was very good, he was kind and said that he felt that it was serious enough for referral and that we should keep the practice informed as to how Ewan was getting on, if there is anything the practice can do.....

We went to the Borders General Hospital (BGH) near Melrose at lunchtime, not really knowing what to expect. We went into the children's ward and waited to be seen by a doctor.

The first doctor was strange, kept asking about Ewan's development, speech, walking, communication, coordination, etc. We didn't know at that time as to why they were asking those questions. The doctor decided that it would be best to have a look at Ewan's kidney, so we waited for an Ultrasound.

The Ultrasound went fine, Ewan was more curious than upset as to what this strange Gel was. Monica and I were just doing what we needed to do to support Ewan and try not to let our imagination get out of control.

We then had a chest X-Ray and went back to the ward to wait for news. Waiting is always the worst part. Even now when Ewan is responding well, I still have problems with waiting.

Eventually the consultant for the Borders Hospital came to see us. He took us out of the treatment room and asked us to go into another room. I could not understand

this, the treatment room was quiet, so why the need for another room. I joked with Monica, "Uh-Oh, this must be the bad news room".

The consultant told us the news, Ewan had a tumour on his kidney. It was most likely Wilms and was almost certainly malignant. How we kept trying to get them to tell us it was just a benign swelling. Ewan just sat there, playing with Monica. We had no words, just raw shock, what can you think? Surely this thing cannot happen to a child, cancers are adult things.

We kept looking for answers, what had we done, was it the time we gave him a jar of food? Has the house been too cold? What about the teething tablets? What caused it?. There is no real root cause. Probably a combination of things really, unfortunate coincidences come together to give you and your family a real emotional thump.

We were then referred to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh. We went to the car, we phoned our parents, what do you say? Ewan is in hospital, he is not well, it looks like cancer. Simple to write, bloody hard to say, you have to keep it together, you have to be there for Ewan, he doesn't know.

We drove up, probably not the safest thing to do and went to Ward 4, oncology, didn't even know that word existed. We saw a Dr Johnson first. She confirmed what the doctors at BGH had said, didn't seem any more real.

We stayed in that Thursday night ready for tests on Friday. You wake up in the morning, concerned with how to get to Perth, How Monica is, is Ewan going to be not quite so wild today? You end up in hospital thinking about nothing else apart from Ewan and cancer.

Friday we met our consultant, Dr Hamish Wallace. Ewan had a CT Scan on his chest and an MRI scan on his abdominal area. Both came back as positive. Ewan had Wilms Tumour and he had additional growths on his lungs. All signs pointed to Stage IV Wilms.

What can you say, people say we have coped well. What other choice do you have, Ewan does not have one, and he needs his parents to be strong. We got through those initial days somehow. All the stress of the Biopsy and choosing the method of access for Chemotherapy application. The wait for the start of treatment, the hope that the "Histology" comes back as "favorable". The start of treatment, the horror of the side effects, he is too young, what way is this to start a life?.

Ewan is doing well, he is showing his parents how to be strong, how to cope. We keep together, Helena came along and proved a wonderful distraction from horror.

And we wait.

Andy
andy@wilmsineurope.net