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Friday, 15th August 2008

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leukaemia girl after stem-cell transplant

Published Date: 09 August 2008

By Gareth Rose

EVERY time three-year-old Bethanie Thomson looks at her little brother, she will be staring at the boy who saved her life.

The young leukaemia sufferer is recovering after receiving a life-saving stem cell transplant from her baby brother – without which she would have faced certain death.

Now she is taking her first steps on the road to recovery and, although she sti

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It requires 15 different types of medication and regular trips to the Sick Kids hospital in Edinburgh, and Yorkhill in Glasgow, the future is looking bright – thanks to seven-month-old Joshua.

Her dad Stuart Jackson, 31, said: "The bond between her and her brother is just amazing. We've always told Bethanie what a special boy he is and what he has done for her. They're like two peas in a pod and I have never seen her look so healthy.

"She has even been able to go on rides at a funfair, which she's never been able to do before. That was so nice to see.

"There's a whole new world out there for her now, and that's all because of Joshua.

"She's still not able to stand – the doctors are looking into that – but we stand Joshua in front of her as motivation because she wants to teach him to walk.

"In many ways he is like her big brother – a mini version."

Bethanie was diagnosed with leukaemia when she was just six months old. She bravely fought her way through it, started to learn to walk and was looking forward to a normal childhood when she relapsed aged two – just before Joshua was born on Boxing Day.

When doctors told her parents, Stuart and Vicky Thomson, from Wallyford, East Lothian, that cells from the umbilical cord were a perfect match making them suitable for a transplant they could not believe it.

Stuart said: "I didn't really think it would work – I always had doubts. When it did work it took a few days to

sink in.

"There was the possibility of a lot of side-effects afterwards, but Bethanie has breezed through it, she's really done well."

The operation itself happened in June, around the time of Bethanie's third birthday, and for safety reasons Joshua was not allowed in her hospital room.

Her parents would hold him at the door window and she would hold up pictures she had drawn for him to see.

With Bethanie undergoing such intensive treatment, Joshua has spent much of his short life in hospital waiting rooms, and the bubbly young lifesaver has become a favourite with nurses.

Stuart said: "He is a lovely little boy. All the nurses love him and give him lots of hugs."

Taking blood rich in stem cells from the umbilical cord is still a relatively new procedure. But experts believe future medical advances will lead to stem cells being used to treat illnesses such as Alzheimer's.

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- **Last Updated:** 09 August 2008 10:52 AM
- **Source:** Edinburgh Evening News
- **Location:** Edinburgh

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