Roger Jahnel
Garland, Texas

The gift of life through donated blood has become very personal for one Rotarian and his family. Until 7 years ago, 76 year old Roger Jahnel never thought he had much reason to worry about his health. He had no evident serious health problems until he was 69 when he suffered a TIA during his weekly Rotary meeting. In the fall of 2003, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and treated with cryosurgery. The following June, he had a stroke while playing golf. During his hospital stay the doctors were having problems stabilizing his blood counts and called in a hematologist who also specialized in oncology.

The relationship between doctor and patient proved not to be a short one, as Roger's health issues unfortunately had not yet ended. By April of 2006, he suffered a recurrence of prostate cancer and had 39 radiation treatments. Three months later his hematologist started weekly shots of Aranesp in an effort to bring up Roger's blood counts. The lengthy need for bolstering those counts made the doctor fairly confident that Roger had been suffering from Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS); a bone marrow test confirmed this diagnosis.

The weekly injections of Aranesp continued, but after Roger was forced to return to the hospital twice over a period of three months to be given fresh infusions of blood, it became clear that other treatments would have to be considered. He was started on Dacogen March 24, 2008 in an effort to treat the MDS. The beginning of the treatment proved rocky, and once again in April of 2008 Roger needed three units of blood and two units of platelets. In the space of a year, Roger had to have 9 units of blood replaced. He and his family were justifiably concerned. A rising PSA count meant that the specter of prostate cancer had reared its ugly head again, this time metastasizing into some areas of the bone. However, for this entire winding road, stabilizing treatments finally proved effective – six months of Dacogen treatments brought Roger's blood counts near normal, while treatment with Eligard, a hormone therapy used in battling prostate cancer, has dropped his PSA levels phenomenally.

Both Roger and Judy have made many wonderful friends on this journey. Fellow Rotarians have been incredibly supportive. Additionally, they feel particularly fortunate to have doctors who have taken a person interest in Roger and the family. Roger's hematologist/oncologist has been wonderfully supportive. He is always accessible and there for Roger. A wonderful example of his level of support was an incident when Roger had developed a respiratory infection. He needed to be admitted to the hospital but there were no beds available. His doctor put Roger in one of his treatment rooms and started IV/antibiotics. Judy and two of the children stayed with

him all day until the doctor felt he was improved enough to go home. His level of care and concern for his patients has soared above and beyond the Hippocratic Oath.

Roger's gift to others who need blood has come through his chairing of the Garland Rotary Club blood drive at Firewheel Mall. Roger, Judy, and their daughter Amy (who is also a Rotarian) are proud of the Rotary Club for their continued participation in raising awareness to the needs of blood donations.

Judy, Roger's wife, has been his companion and helpmate through all of this. Having worked for seven years in the medical profession as a medical secretary she is sensitive to his medical needs.

Roger and Judy have four children. Bill, age 40, is a history professor at Palamor College in San Marcos, California. Amy, 39, who has been a Rotarian for 14 years, is the mother of their 8 year old grandchild, Roger, who obviously is named for his Grandpa. Julie, 33, teaches first grade in the Garland School district and she and her husband Ryan are the parents of their six month old granddaughter Allison. Matt, 32, is a personal trainer and owns a promotion company.

Roger has a degree is in hotel and restaurant management, and he worked in the food service industry for 25 years. Prior to retirement in 2000 both he and Judy, with the support of all their children, owned and operated a check recovery company for 16 years.

Roger and Judy write:

> *"Our children are beyond awesome. They have been there for us every step of the way. Without their love and support as well as that of our friends and our church this would have been a much more difficult journey."*

Pictures
Roger and Judy
Grandson, Roger David Jahnel, 'helping' at the 2008 blood drive.

Additional Notes

- MDS are a group of rare and complex diseases in which the bone marrow does not make enough healthy blood cells. Immature blood cells, called blasts, do not function normally and either die in the bone marrow or soon after they enter the blood. This leaves less room for healthy white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets to develop in the bone marrow. When there are fewer blood cells, infections are more common and anemia that does not respond to commonly employed therapies such as iron and vitamins can occur. The symptoms are closely related to those of leukemia. In addition, because of a decline in platelets the patient is particularly susceptible to bleeding. [1]
- MDS usually occurs in older people, typically starting after age 50. For many people, it develops without any known cause." [2]
- While there is no known cure for MDS, one of the primary treatments for problems caused by low blood cell counts, such as fatigue and infections, is transfusions of blood products. This is particularly necessary when the patient is bleeding or is having a procedure that may cause bleeding.[3]

[1] http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/treatment/myelodysplastic/patient
[2] http://rarediseases.about.com/od/rarediseases1/a/myelodysplastic.htm
[3] http://www.mdstreatment.org/about-mds/