

## **Do it For Doyle: A Brief Biography of Leukemia Survivor Doyle Hagany**

Doyle Hagany was one grade below mine, but we lived fairly close to one another and played on the same flag football team. Although we were not best friends, I had spent a lot of time with him through school and sports. He had lived in a small home down the road from me, and he was no different from any other kid I had known that went to our middle school. After about the first two weeks of my own 6th grade school year and Doyle's 5th grade year, Doyle stopped showing up to school. Not only that, but he had stopped showing up to flag football games on the weekend. I had heard nothing until they mentioned something on the school announcements about why Doyle was absent.

On September 18th, 2009, Doyle was diagnosed with a T-Cell lymphocytic leukemia, also known as acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL), at the age of ten years old. He was pulled from school immediately and began undergoing chemotherapy at a very young age. According to his own testimony, he doesn't remember every detail of his chemotherapy, but he was not in a high-risk patient as his cancer was caught early enough, even though the leukemia was an aggressive form. Much of what he remembers is what his mother has told him. He was lucky to enter remission within one to two month of treatment, but received chemotherapy for about five months to follow to ensure his cancer was riden from him. I did not get the chance to visit him during his treatments, but he was surrounded by friends, family, and even got to meet players from the Jets NFL team during his treatment (Right).

Despite his remission, the Hagany family struggled to pay for Doyle's expensive treatments. Doyle's mother, Sara, has a seizure disorder that physically prevents her from working and paying for the treatment alone as a single mother. The most inspiring part of Doyle's story is how far our community rallied to raise funds for Doyle's treatment under the title "Do it for Doyle". Through this fundraiser, the community of Mendham, NJ hosted a community walk in which hundreds of people showed up from surrounding communities to show their support for Doyle. In addition to this, "Doyle's Desserts" was created by local members of Mendham, selling desserts to raise even more money for Doyle's treatments, on top of another \$1000 dollars raised by local girl scouts. Together, the Mendham community raised a significant amount of money to fund Doyle's cancer treatment, allowing him to undergo chemotherapy for his leukemia with very little economic hardship.



Fast forward 7 years later to today, and Doyle has long returned to his old self. I played lacrosse with him through high school, and he's going to college like any normal kid. Aside from bone and joint pain along with the occasional check-up, cancer is in his past, and he does not think of it as a traumatic experience. He noted to me that he is treated differently in many cases when people find out he had cancer, but has come to be "OK" with that fact. Although not a traumatic experience, he emphasized that cancer was "life changing", and that his "outlook on life is more positive" as a result.

## **My Perspective**

I decided to include my this section to talk about how I feel about Doyle's story and why it is significant. In the beginning of BME 1130, the question was asked whether or not cancer is the norm nowadays. From my recollection, the response was split, and many agreed that although it wasn't normal, it was most certainly common. While cancer isn't uncommon, with 1 in 285 children being diagnosed with cancer, the impact that cancer has cannot be understated<sup>1</sup>. In Doyle's scenario, cancer took away about two years of a normal childhood from him, while also placing his family under extreme economic burden as a result. On the flip side, the diagnosis of one child with leukemia rallied an entire county together, raising thousands of dollars in under 3 months. While I naturally have bias as I watched one of my own friends experience cancer, the disease should not be treated as something normal, or even common for that matter. Despite the statistics that say cancer is fairly common in children, the impact of the disease cannot be understated, and should continue to be treated as the life-threatening disease it is.

One other point I wanted to make about Doyle and his situation was the fact that it is possible to recover from cancer and not acquire some form of PTSD or distress following the disease. As I explained in my other product "Is Cancer a Traumatic Experience for Children?: An Evaluation of 'Has the Traumatic Impact of Cancer Been Overestimated?'" , cancer impacts different children very differently, and Doyle's case is a prime example of how children do in fact have the ability to overcome adversity. In Doyle's case, his story confirms to legitimacy of the statement that cancer is not an overly traumatic experience, but still remains life changing nonetheless.

*Note: Most Info for this paper came from my own personal experience as well as an interview with Doyle*

## **Works Cited**

1. ACCO. "US Childhood Cancer Statistics." ACCO. Childhood Cancer International, 04 May 2016. Web. 1 May 2017. <<http://www.acco.org/us-childhood-cancer-statistics/>>.
2. Hagany, Doyle. "Leukemia in Childhood." Telephone interview. 24 Feb. 2017.