

Fundraising benefit in Caledon coming to fight DBA

Diamond Blackfan Anemia (DBA) is a potentially life threatening, rare genetic blood disorder, characterized by severe chronic anemia due to complete or partial failure of the bone marrow to produce red blood cells.

At just 12 weeks of age, Jack, the fourth of five children born to Janet and Nel Pereira, experienced a life saving blood transfusion. Little did anyone realize at that time, it was the first of more than 115 transfusions he would receive to date as part of the treatment protocol for the disease he was diagnosed with just a few weeks later.

With DBA, iron overload from excessive transfusions can cause damage to the body's major organs. So Jack's treatment also requires being hooked up to a pump every night of his life, to remove excessive iron from his body.

'Just managing DBA is hard enough . . . living with the unknowns is even worse,' his mother said.

DBA is extremely rare, with less than 35 cases diagnosed in North America each year. It can cause other medical problems, such as short stature, thumb abnormalities and heart problems, among others. It requires blood transfusions and iron overload therapy, and there is no known cure. At present, transfusions are one of the treatments available and/or the risky process of a stem cell transplant is considered potentially effective.

Pereira, since her son's diagnosis, has been his (and DBA's) most tireless advocate. She is the co-founder of DBA Canada and the current Executive Director. She is also the founder of the Jack's Fight For a Cure Fundraising Gala. To date, she has raised more than \$150,000 toward life-saving research for this rare genetic disease and she is passionate about finding a cure.

Come to the fourth annual Jack's Fight for a Cure Gala, taking place Nov. 11 at the Royal Ambassador Banquet Hall in Caledon. This signature event is formal dress, featuring cocktails, a sit down dinner, auction items, casino tables, guest speakers and more. It's a chance to share a wonderful evening with friends while supporting an seven-year-old boy's fight against this life altering disease. What motivates Pereira, and her team of supporters, premier sponsors MWAC and ESSO, along with family and friends? Here is her story, ripped from the pages of her facebook account:

'Last night at bedtime, shortly after putting in his needle, I found Jack in his room crying. When I asked him what was wrong, he said, 'Mommy, I hate DBA and I'm sick of needles. Why did God give ME DBA?' The only reply I could come up with (as I struggle myself with this question) was to tell him, 'I know DBA sucks, Jack, and we are working hard to find a cure and I don't know why you have DBA, but I can tell you what I do know is that God gives his toughest battles to only his strongest warriors.' I'm sharing this with you all, not because I'm looking for sympathy or pity, but so you all understand why we keep fundraising through dinner galas and other special events. We need your help to find a cure for Jack and all families living with DBA. Please book tickets today. Together we can find a cure.'

Come out for this signature event. Help support Jack's Fight for a Cure. For more information on times and ticket prices, visit www.jacksfightforacure.com