Million pound charity milestone

A family has raised more than a million pounds for research into the most aggressive type of brain tumours in memory of a daughter who died aged just 31.

The Emily Morris Fund was established in 2017 in memory of the young woman from London. Now her family has unveiled a plaque at the University of Edinburgh where research takes place into the disease.

Emily’s father Jack is Chair of Trustees at the Fund which collaborates with The Brain Tumour Charity. He and his family have visited Edinburgh to see for themselves how their fundraising is helping to screen thousands of drugs to find even one to treat glioblastoma. The project is co-funded by Cancer Research UK and is believed to be the largest of its kind in the world: an unbiased screening of drugs in human glioblastoma cell models.

Emily first became unwell with headaches and what doctors thought was a flu virus in 2015 when she was 29. Then her heart rate rocketed for no apparent reason and a cardiac specialist prescribed her medication but couldn’t find the underlying cause.

When she began to experience a strange smell and taste up to 20 times a day, she was referred to an ear, nose and throat specialist who sent Emily for an MRI scan. Expecting nothing out of the ordinary, Emily went to find out the results on her own and was shocked when a consultant told her she had a brain tumour and needed urgent surgery.

A craniotomy removed much of the tumour and confirmed it was a glioblastoma multiforme, one of the most aggressive and difficult to treat brain cancers. Emily’s treatment included 30 sessions of radiotherapy and nine rounds of chemotherapy, but the tumour returned.

Emily’s father Jack said: “Emily had six months after her initial treatment where she did pretty well. Following that it was then a process of, as I used to say, trying hold back a tsunami.”

In November/December 2016 Emily’s oncologist said she was fighting an uphill battle, and her family agreed that she should come home.

Jack said: “I had a moment that I’ll treasure for the rest of my life with Emily before she died. I was just sitting with her and at this time she couldn’t speak and I did a little wave and said ‘I love you’ and she just said to me ‘love you’. I don’t know how she found the words but they were the last words she ever said to me.”

Emily died on 3 January 2017 and as she had been such a colourful character who loved jewellery, her mum Susan started making bracelets to sell in her memory.

Friends and family far and wide organised marathons, bike rides and numerous other challenge events to raise money in Emily’s memory. Her family used these proceeds to set up The Emily Morris Fund and sought advice from The Brain Tumour Charity.

The Charity told them about Professor Neil Carragher’s research at the University of Edinburgh and they were “absolutely blown away” by his efforts to find treatments for glioblastoma and decided to support his work.

Jack said: “Funding research through The Brain Tumour Charity, wherever it needs to be in the world, by the best practitioners, by the best institutions, is the lifeblood of finding a cure for this awful disease.”

Emily’s brother, Bobby, added: “We will always keep Emily’s memory alive because we talk about her a lot. Whenever we’re at a family dinner or a birthday, we’ll always do a little toast to her and just make sure that she’s remembered…. Our family will always be a family of five people, we’re not a family of four.”

You can find out more about Professor Carragher’s research here: https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/news/research-news/finding-new-drugs-for-treating-glioblastoma/

Harry, Susan and Jack Morris

Lucy Grist, The Brain Tumour Charity with Harry Susan and Jack Morris and Phoebe Day from The Brain Tumour Charity

This plaque is in honour of Emily Morris (1985-2017)
whose legacy has accelerated research
into glioblastoma brain tumours through

THE EMILY MORRIS FUND

in partnership with
The Brain Tumour Charity

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