



Girl starts kindergarten despite doctors telling her she wouldn't live past the age of two

WHEN doctors told this girl's parents she wasn't going to live past the age of two, they scoured the globe for another answer. A doctor in Australia was their saving grace.

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STARTING your first day of big school is a huge deal for any kid. But for six-year-old Linke Nel, it's an absolute miracle.

At just 14 months old, Linke was diagnosed with leukaemia. Doctors told Rene and Brandt Nel that their daughter would not make it to her second birthday.

So, you can just imagine how fortunate they felt watching their little fighter run through the doors of her new classroom last week.

"Although it is emotionally hard, we're extremely happy that we get to celebrate this day with her," Mrs Nel said.

"After being told that we would never have this day with her, it makes it super special," she added.

The Nel family were living in a rural town in South Africa when 14-month-old Linke came down with a case of pneumonia — which was untreatable at the time.

No antibiotic seemed to help. But after driving four hours to seek help from their local hospital, Mrs Nel received devastating news no parent wants to hear.

Her little baby was diagnosed with leukaemia and probably wouldn't make it to her second birthday.

Linke was given six months of treatment in South Africa but due to little improvement, doctors told Mrs Nel they'd run out of options for her daughter.

But Mrs Nel and her husband refused to give up hope.

After jumping on Google and sending out 130 emails to doctors from around the world, they received a single response from Dr Luciano Dalla-Pozza in Australia.



Linke's parents never thought she'd go to school. *Source: Supplied*

“He asked us to send all her medical files, which I did, and within 24 hours he said ‘I can help her,’” Mrs Nel said.

The Nel family “sold pretty much everything” they had and moved to Australia so Linke could receive the treatment.



The Nel family packed up their life to get Linke treatment. *Source: Supplied*

Dr Luciano Dalla-Pozza assessed Linke's condition as soon as they arrived in Australia, and began a clinical trial with her the very next day.

By the end of the first month, Linke was in remission.

"We are thankful to have her and be able to reach different milestones that we'd been told we wouldn't have. To see her go out and make friends and special bonds which she was robbed of when she was a little girl," Mrs Nel said.

The Nel family said they wouldn't have been able to save their daughter if it wasn't for the support and research from the Children's Medical Research Institute.

Children's Medical Research Institute is at the forefront of international research into cancer and leads the revolutionary ProCan project.

The not-for-profit institute is funded by competitive grants and a community of supporters who participate in events such as Jeans for Genes Day.

"Research is important because it gives children a chance, it gives them that fair chance at life. A chance at having a normal life," Mrs Nel said.



The five-year-old is now thriving as a kindergarten student. *Source: Supplied*

Thanks to the work of the Children’s Medical Research Institute (CMRI), Linke has been able to reach important milestones — like having her first day of school.

“I’ve swallowed thousands of tears today just to make the day easier for Linke because she’s super excited about it,” Mrs Nel said.

To donate to the Children’s Medical Research Institute, [visit cmri.org.au](http://www.cmri.org.au).

Full story: <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/parenting/school-life/girl-starts-kindergarten-despite-doctors-telling-her-she-wouldnt-live-past-the-age-of-two/news-story/463c11023c73181144cb48e7e1d421ba?cspt=1518572136|ff1ad3965c173cf84849a2ef813df31d>