

MIND TO MIND

*Creative writing that explores the abstract side
of our profession and our lives*

Carol Wiley Cassella, M.D., Editor

On His Own Two Feet

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It all began after my 6-year-old son “V’s” first chemotherapy session when he came out of it a bit tired and he asked me to carry him to the car, needless to say, I did. As we were leaving the hospital, even though everything had gone well, it felt like we were going home defeated, hunched over and with our tails between our legs, with my boy on me ... sort of like picking up pieces. I thought then, that I might have been doing a disservice to my son in the grand scheme of things by “carrying” him to the car since life was tough enough with or without this disease, our support will ALWAYS be there but I thought he needed to know he was no pushover. When we got home we sat down and talked about the fact that medulloblastoma was not going to take the best of us and every time he would leave the hospital he would leave “on his own two feet” as a symbol of turning the tables on this disease, as a symbol of him having the upper hand on this tough path, as a way of having valor against adversity, as a statement of self-reliance and endurance. “V” has matured so much and so rapidly since his diagnosis in late June 2013 that he amazes me. Diligently, after each chemotherapy session, once the port was de-accessed, he would go towards that door walking, holding my hand.... It was a thing of beauty to watch him go, determined, brave and strong. It was, and will always be, a teaching for the whole family. “On my own two feet” became our mantra. “On my own two feet” brought us together as a family, made us more resilient. Many times we would arrive home after battling both cancer and chemotherapy, in addition to appendicitis, otitis media, febrile neutropenia, all of these while on chemo and he’d go about his business as if nothing was really happening; to watch him brave these episodes represented a strange collage of arduousness, herculean and invigorating feelings. Each one of the those

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times when we'd finish a session or conquered a new milestone, it felt that we had just won a battle ... one more towards winning the war ... and it was every time he did it, a breath of fresh air, a thrill. At times it felt like he was, in fact, "carrying ME to the car," that is how much of a tough cookie "V" is. Despite the fact that we are not "out of the woods" yet (but then again we know in our hearts we are) and that we continue to fight, I have to say that with conviction, love and support, the toughest of tasks in front of you can be overcome ... even DEFEATING CANCER!! Today, I am happy to share with you that he has completed his chemotherapy and radiotherapy with the help of a caring and nurturing team of doctors, nurses and administrators, that his port has been removed and that "V" is getting ready to live the rest of his beautiful life, ... STANDING ..., on his own two feet.