

A rare affliction and a medical first

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At only 16, Madison Tully faced the biggest challenge of her life ? a rare and deadly combination of lupus and sickle cell disease that caused her immune system to turn on her own body. She was at Tulane Medical Center last summer in debilitating pain as doctors proposed a possible cure.



However, the procedure ? a bone marrow transplant ? had never been attempted to treat both diseases at once, according to medical literature.

There was another complicating factor: Tully is adopted and of mixed heritage, making it almost impossible to find a matched donor from anyone other than a sibling.



A successful bone marrow transplant has given a new lease on life to 16-year-old Madison Tully, shown with her Tulane physician, Dr. Julie Kanter, a pediatric oncologist. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Tully's parents had an open adoption and kept in touch with her biological sister, who volunteered to be tested. Despite only a 25 percent chance, her sister turned out to be a perfect donor match.

"It was unbelievably good luck," said pediatric oncologist [Dr. Julie Kanter](#), director of the Tulane Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program.

Now more than a year after the procedure, Tully's transformation has been remarkable. She is in full remission. Her hair, which she lost during treatment, has grown back and she's lost all the weight gained from the intense drug regimen used for lupus. Now, like any high school senior, her weeks are filled with school, friends and football games.

"I feel great," she said, during a recent trip back to Tulane for a checkup with Kanter.

"The prognosis for Madison is fantastic," Kanter said. "She has a 95 percent chance that this is never coming back."

Tully's family has developed a special bond with Kanter and the staff at [Tulane Hospital for Children](#).

"I am so very grateful for the wonderful, caring, compassionate and professional person that Dr. Kanter is to my family," said Madison's father, Jeff Tully. "God has abundantly blessed us with Madison's cure and for allowing us to travel this journey with Tulane physicians."