

# Blood and Glory

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Today I completed a 5km race for the Blood Bank, finished in 27:38. It was the first time in 4 years due to my illness and recovery that I have been able to run under a 9:00min pace. I was especially happy because 8 months before, I couldn't run more than 1 min intervals 7 times at a 12:00 min pace. And here I was today finishing the race with a new 5km personal record post-transplant after having done a 12 mile hill bike workout and 700m swim yesterday afternoon. A glorious victory.

A year ago, I walked in that same race because it was 7 weeks after my incisional repair. I remember getting close to the finish line and saw that if I jogged the last 50 feet, I could finish under 1 hour. But I knew that would set me back physically. So I shut out the people cheering me on, ignored the people running by me, grit my teeth and walked under the finish line with tears in my eyes. I met up with friends who had run it and said I wouldn't do another 5km again until I could run it. It was too hard because at that time, I didn't know when I would be able to run again.

But today I was reminded 'hard' is all relative. A relatively new friend in my life came down today to cheer me on – she has lupus, arthritis, multiple sclerosis and several other complications. Her daily regime to simply get dressed in the morning and hold a cup of coffee is challenged because of the degradation of her hands. She is a brilliant aerospace engineer yet deals with many medication side effects along with her debilitating body with such grace. I am so inspired by her strength and her positive attitude against the adversity that has been thrown her way. It doesn't seem fair that she has multiple illnesses to deal with, one alone would be more than enough.

Today's race was for a great cause I strongly support. Every 3 seconds someone needs blood because of disease, surgery or an accident. While I was fortunate to not require blood during my surgery, my mother pre and post transplant did, multiple times. There were several families represented today who had eventually lost a loved one but had relied on the blood donations from others until that time came. While it may seem like a simple gift, giving blood is a very powerful and invaluable one if you are able. And I think it is great that LifeTech arranges blood drives on campus to make it easier for those who do wish to participate.

I had to stop donating blood many years ago because of my illness, but I can run to support the cause. I completely understand not everyone is keen about needles – I used to hate them because of the memories of my mother's dialysis needles. Now it is part of the package of being a transplant recipient. Once a month I get a minimum of 4 vials taken to look at my levels; sometimes like tomorrow morning, I have to repeat

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them within a week because of a med change or a sign of a possible infection. It's just one of those things you deal with. I still don't like them but they are saving my life.

I realize one day it may not be wise or I may be prevented from running. Until that time, I run with a different purpose in mind -- I run for my own health and well-being, I run in honor of those waiting for a transplant, and I run for those who simply can't.