



Joe Ferguson Again Fighting For Life

by Chris Brown, Lead Journalist Last Updated: 2/4/2008 2:08 PM ET

After a successful battle against Burkitt's lymphoma almost two years ago, former Bills quarterback Joe Ferguson is now facing a new and more serious fight with cancer. A few weeks ago Ferguson was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia.

Currently in the intensive care unit at the world-renowned M.D. Anderson cancer treatment center in Houston, Ferguson's condition improved slightly Monday.



"He had a good night and is beginning to get some of his color back," said Ferguson's wife Sandy. "He is still on the oxygen but both his blood pressure and heart rate are lower. Joe's blood count is still low, but better than it was previously."

The former Buffalo signal caller (1973-84) developed pneumonia over the weekend and was on as many as five antibiotics. He also underwent a series of blood transfusions to boost his white blood cell count before being taken to the ICU Sunday.

Ferguson successfully battled pneumonia in his first bout with cancer back in 2005, but it took him six weeks as he spent nine days in the hospital and four days in intensive care.

"That scared me more than the cancer almost," said Ferguson back in 2006 of his first battle with cancer. "Once I got pneumonia I really got down and was really sick. That scared me more than anything else."

The 57-year old Ferguson has been at M.D. Anderson for about a week since being diagnosed.

"Our doctor initially was not as positive as had been previously with the Burkitt's Lymphoma, but wanted to wait on a few more tests to decide the treatment," said Sandy. "When the tests came back Joe had the best type he could have had with the success rate better than some of the other subtypes of AML."

Ferguson went through a physically taxing schedule of chemotherapy in late 2005 and early 2006 before finally beating his previous form of cancer. Unfortunately chemotherapy, as effective as it can be in treating cancer, has its drawbacks.

According to his physicians it's common for patients to develop forms of leukemia as a result of previous chemotherapy treatments. That appears to be what has happened with Ferguson.

Last week Ferguson finished his first round of chemotherapy to battle the newly developed leukemia. He will remain at M.D. Anderson through the month of February after which his bone marrow will be tested to see if the leukemia is in remission.

"If it is in remission they will continue with the chemotherapy for six more treatments," said Sandy. "But they will be four-day treatments and given as out-patient."

Sandy maintains a website to update friends and fans of her husband's condition at this link (<http://www.hickman.k12.ca.us/joef.html>).

Fans can also send personal e-mail messages of support to Ferguson at Jferguson@lindsey.com.

Ferguson and his wife credited their strong faith in pulling them through Joe's first battle with cancer. They genuinely appreciate the well wishes and prayers they've received the past few years.

"Thank you for your outpouring of love and support," said Sandy. "They have been extremely healing for Joe and our family."

"You've got to believe that support works," said Ferguson following his first battle with cancer. "And I believe it does because it gave me comfort."