

Woman risks unborn baby to save her sister

Margaret Linley 29Jan08

FIONA Miles, 31, has risked her unborn child's life in a desperate effort to save her sister.

Ms Miles was 14 weeks pregnant when she was told the shocking news her younger sister Simone Wignall had leukemia and would die without a bone marrow transplant.

"My husband and I talked about it at length but from the moment I knew we were compatible I knew I was going to do it. She's my sister and my best friend," Ms Miles said.

In what is believed to be an Australian-first, Ms Miles donated the bone marrow last October, when she was 29 weeks pregnant. Doctors had hoped to delay the transplant until after the birth of her baby, but Ms Wignall's condition rapidly deteriorated, leaving them no choice.

Without an Australian precedent to guide them, doctors looked to Seattle where a pregnant donor had been involved in a successful harvest, Ms Miles said.

"The doctors referred to research in Seattle because there was the health of my child to consider as well in all of this," she said.

Ms Wignall, an emergency department nurse at Geelong Hospital, visited her GP seven months ago with headaches, a stiff neck and extreme tiredness.

"Being a nurse meant I had sussed out my symptoms already. I said to my husband they're going to tell me I have leukemia," she said.

Her GP sent her for blood tests and that night the doctor gave her the news that she had acute myeloid leukemia.

With a bone marrow transplant her only hope, the sisters were tested and found to be compatible.

Home in Waurin Ponds after intensive treatment in Melbourne, Ms Wignall's fight against the disease continues.

"The leukemia has returned in the last few weeks," she said.

Ms Miles gave birth to Spencer, a healthy baby boy, on January 4.



Fiona Miles was pregnant when she donated bone marrow to help her sister Simone Wignall, who was battling leukemia. Photo: MIKE DUGDALE