

# Sister's life-saving wedding gift

Kim Thomas - The Press | Saturday, 15 March 2008

**As Jemma Jacklin watches her only sibling get married today, she knows he would probably not have reached the altar without her.**

Nick Beardsworth, 30, developed leukaemia about three years ago and was given a 30 per cent chance of survival if he did not receive a bone-marrow transplant.

Marrow can be donated only by a sibling, and there is just a one-in-four chance it will match.

Jacklin, who lives in England, was tested and was compatible.



SAVED: Nick Beardsworth and his sister, Jemma Jacklin, relax in Christchurch yesterday.

However, because she was pregnant and could not undergo a transplant, Beardsworth had to wait months in Christchurch before the September, 2005, operation.

Beardsworth said he was extremely grateful for his sister's help.

"We were always close but we have a special bond now. I probably wouldn't be here without her," he said.

Jacklin, 33, said she was terrified when she heard her brother was unwell.

Because of the low rate of success in matching bone marrow, Jacklin said, she did not let herself get excited it would work.

"I felt so helpless on the other side of the world with my fingers crossed that we would be a match. I so desperately wanted to help, but I just had to wait and see," she said.

Once Jacklin gave birth, the bone marrow was taken out of the back of her leg and sent to Christchurch.

The procedure was not easy, with Beardsworth's Christchurch-based doctor, Ruth Spearing, flying to England to pick up the marrow.

Once Spearing picked it up, she had less than 40 hours to return it to New Zealand for a scheduled transplant, Beardsworth said.

"Apparently, Ruth couldn't sleep the whole flight back because she had to keep checking the marrow was all right," Beardsworth said.

By the time he got the transplant he was in poor physical condition.

He said chemotherapy had killed off his bone marrow, destroying his immune system in the process, so he could replace his infected marrow with his sister's healthy marrow.

Now in remission, Beardsworth said it was difficult to express his gratitude to Christchurch Hospital.

His family had done their best to say thanks, donating \$10,000 they raised through events such as sponsored bicycle rides to Christchurch Hospital's bone-marrow unit.