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Matching donor, renewed hope

[Debbie Griffin](#) River Falls Journal
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UW-River Falls Assistant Professor Kamal Adam and his family needed for something incredible to happen.

Diagnosed with leukemia a few months ago, Adam underwent multiple tests and treatments including two rounds of exhausting chemotherapy and a month-and-a-half hospital stay.

Doctors recommended a bone marrow transplant, giving Adam and his wife, Salma Attroon, hope that he'd live to see their three children grow up. First they had to find a donor match.



Submitted photo Kamal Adam, in back on right, soon begins the monthlong process of getting a bone-marrow transplant that doctors hope will successfully treat his leukemia.

The family turned to Adam's siblings living in Sudan and Saudi Arabia. After testing eight of them, doctors didn't find a match.

Adam's caretakers were ready to begin testing the general public to find the much-needed matching marrow donor. Nearly desperate and with few-to-no options, Attroon contacted Adam's doctor in Sudan and pleaded with him to re-examine the test results.

Surely, she thought, one of the siblings had to be a match. Attroon was right. Just before Thanksgiving, the family learned that Adam's 25-year-old sister could donate marrow.

Carrie Larson, a neighbor helping the family and organizing a benefit, said Adam's sister is waiting to leave Cairo for the United States. Nearly as soon as she arrives, she'll begin donating marrow.

Doctors must first test her for diseases and administer protein shots.

Larson said Adam is at the Mayo Clinic now, undergoing pre-transplant preparation. He and Attroon had a scare last Friday when Adam underwent emergency gall-bladder-removal surgery.

His preparation will include six days of chemotherapy that will kill off existing cells and take his immune system to nearly zero.

After that, doctors do the bone-marrow transplant as an outpatient procedure.

Larson said the couple worries about Adam being released with a compromised immune system, but Mayo no longer keeps leukemia patients in the hospital. Doctors say people recover and feel better outside the hospital.

Adam, with Attroon as his caretaker, will have to report daily and won't be able to leave Rochester, Minn., for about a month. Being without their children concerned them a lot, according to Larson.

They've never been away from them and don't want to impose on neighbors and friends.

"I tried to assure the Adams that the children would rather be without them for a month, than the alternative," Larson said.

And one doctor advised them: They dare not put the transplant off for long. The sooner the better, they were told.

Attroon graduates this week from her studies to become a medical assistant. While she considered quitting school when Adam got sick, he insisted she finish.

Friends, UW-RF colleagues and people who don't even know the family have posted notes of support on his Caring Bridge Web site: www.caringbridge.org. Type "kamaladam" into the square that says Visit a Caring Bridge Web site.

Larson, trying to master the time challenges of holidays, two families and her career, said details on Adam's fundraiser are pending. She still hopes to pull something together early in 2008.

Meanwhile, anyone who wants to help Adam and his family can send gifts to the Kamal Adam Fund/c/o First National Bank of River Falls/104 E. Locust St./River Falls, WI 54022.

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