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Homecoming: Professor fights for life

[Phil Pfuehler](#) River Falls Journal
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Kamal Adam — a Sudan native, husband, father of three and a UW-River Falls assistant professor in agriculture engineering technology — has been hospitalized for over a month with an aggressive type of leukemia.

Adam lives on the west side of River Falls and is being treated at St. Paul's United Hospital. His condition, which began as a simple ear infection, is very serious.

The good news is that Adam's immune system is strong enough so he can safely return home — for now — after 44 days in a hospital.

However, his life may hinge on finding a suitable donor for a bone-marrow transplant.

"Kamal has an acute, rare form of leukemia," says his doctor, Domingo Perez of United Hospital, a hematologist and oncologist. "Even with multiple rounds of chemotherapy, he is unlikely to be cured."

Adam has endured two grueling chemotherapy cycles.

Costly testing efforts among 10 siblings living in Saudi Arabia and Sudan to find a bone-marrow transplant failed. None were found to be suitable donors.

Perez said the hospital, using a national and international registry, has started a computer search to find other potential bone-marrow donors.

"Because of his ethnic origin, this may be more difficult and take time," Perez said.



This is Kamal, Salma is to his left. From Left to Right : Talal, Shihab and Mustafa

“Kamal was the healthiest man I’ve ever seen. He never got sick,” said Salma Adam, his wife of 16 years. “I go visit him every day in the hospital now. It’s so hard, what he’s going through.”

“He’s a loving husband and a wonderful dad. I can’t believe the level of support for him that has come from the community and the campus. It’s awesome.”

The Adams are both U.S. citizens. This is Kamal’s third year at UW-RF.

He teaches introduction to ag-engineering; machinery and power mechanics; precision agriculture technology; and various seminars.

Kamal has a doctorate from Iowa State University where he also taught before coming to UW-RF.

Lisa Owens, UW-RF dean’s assistant in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, said Kamal’s colleagues have taken over his class load.

“They are all chipping in to cover Kamal’s classes,” Owens said. “They’ve been very eager to help do that.”

By doing so, Owens said that Kamal, a fairly new university employee, won’t have to deplete his limited sick leave right away. By next semester, it will be necessary to hire a short-term replacement if Kamal can’t return.

“Kamal is just a sweet man,” Owens said. “He’s modest, soft-spoken, and very involved and devoted to his students.”

Some students, like those from the university’s Agricultural-Mechanical Club, have volunteered to do snow removal at the Adam house and any other yard upkeep this fall. Math department students are tutoring the three Adam sons who are in elementary, middle and high school.

Owens said that UW-RF faculty and staff also bring the Adam family full dinners with dessert every day.

“That’s been so helpful. I have not cooked since Kamal went into the hospital,” Salma said.

Said Owens: “There’s been just a phenomenal response on campus. We have a lot of kind-hearted people who want to help this family.”

Salma is not only looking after her gravely ill husband and three children, she is studying to be a medical assistant.

She was taking classes at Chippewa Valley Technical College in River Falls. Now she’s starting six weeks of daily training at a Woodbury, Minn., hospital to finish.

“I almost quit,” Salma said. “Kamal wouldn’t let me. He insists I keep on so that I have a decent job in case I have to raise the children on my own.”

Neighbor Carrie Larson says River Falls citizens can also help this family.

“What do the Adams’ need?” she asked. “The entire cost of this whole ordeal will not be covered by insurance. Right now I don’t know how much will or won’t be covered.”

Larson has set up this account that anyone can contribute to: Kamal Adam Fund/First National Bank/104 E. Locust St./River Falls WI 54022.

With huge, mounting medical bills expected for the Adam family, Larson said she’d like to find someone to help coordinate fundraising.

Larson said she was asked by a friend why she’s getting so involved with the Adams.

“We moved back to River Falls eight years ago when we knew that we were going to have more children,” she said. “We wanted to raise them in a community where people knew and cared about each other. We also wanted to be closer to friends and family.

“I couldn’t imagine something like this happening to our family and not having a support system like we are blessed to have in our lives.

“(The Adam) family is relatively new to the community. They are good people, and they don’t have the support that most of us do. I think it is important that we help them. It is good for our kids, our neighborhoods and our souls.”

Anyone wanting to assist Larson with fundraising events for the Adams or who is willing to be tested as a bone-marrow candidate should contact her by e-mail at infokamal@aol.com.

For those wishing to send messages of support to the Adam family, go to www.caringbridge.org/visit/kamaladam and click on “Guestbook.”

Reach Phil Pfuehler at rfeditor@rivertowns.net and at 426-1050.



Submitted photo Waiting for their dad to return home soon, the Adam children gather around their mother, Salma. There’s Mustafa, a Meyer Middle School sixth grader, and Shihab, a Rocky Branch second grader, next to Salma, while Talal, a high school freshman, is behind.