

Margaret's Story

In 1993 Margaret was diagnosed, after a long and difficult series of tests and explorations, with a condition called primary pulmonary hypertension a rare condition affecting the blood vessels of the lungs whereby they become very narrow restricting blood flow to the heart. Eventually this condition leads to heart failure and ultimately death. It has no known cause and mainly affects women in their 20's and 30's.

In 1993 the only treatment for PPH - not cure - was a double lung transplant.

Margaret was a fit, healthy 33 year old. She had a bright and exciting future and this all came crashing down around her as she sat in the doctor's office and he told her of her poor prognosis and her need for a double lung transplant.

At the young age of 33 Margaret was placed on the waiting list at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne for a double lung transplant.

Her health deteriorated and she went from an independent young woman to being in a wheelchair and needing 24 hour round the clock care. Margaret had to remain focused and determined to stay alive to reach transplantation. Unfortunately 1 in 5 people waiting for a transplant die before organs become available. Margaret waited 7 months before donor lungs became available.

After a 10 hour operation, 1 week in a coma and 3 more weeks in hospital recovering and learning to walk again Margaret left ready to restart life with the perseverance and determination that this challenge was not going to overcome her.

As Margaret got on with her life she began to reflect on the need to do something to support the Alfred Hospital.

Of course the issue of organ rejection was on her mind. Chronic lung rejection is the most serious problem facing all lung transplant recipients and is the largest cause of death.

In 2001 Margaret was diagnosed with Chronic Lung Rejection. By December of that year there was nothing more that could be done for her. The fear that she faced at that time was overwhelming. As she lay dying, a decision was made by the medical team to put her on the list for a second transplant. This decision was not taken lightly and the ethical and moral as well as medical implications were discussed at great length.

In January 2002 donor lungs became available and Margaret became the 1st successful adult in Australia to undergo 2 double lung transplants.

In January 2006 Margaret once again became seriously ill with chronic lung rejection and within months her lungs failed to the point where she was near death, in a wheelchair and on oxygen 24 hours a day. Her only hope of survival was a 3rd lung transplant and in August Margaret became the only person in Australia to undergo 3 double lung transplants.

Sadly Margaret lost her battle with chronic lung rejection and passed away on 13th September 2009. Margaret was an inspiration to those who had the privilege of knowing her and working with her.

Her legacy will live on through the work of the Margaret Pratt Foundation.