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**Former Bettendorf Football Coach Participates in Stem Cell Study to Fight Aggressive Multiple Sclerosis**

*Fundraising Offers Crucial Support for Family's Six-Figure Expenses*

**BETTENDORF, IA (October 23, 2012)** –As football season shifts into high gear nationwide, Brian Barquist, a former head offensive football coach from Bettendorf, Ia., finds himself on the defense in the game of a lifetime. Barquist, 38, also a former teacher at Bettendorf High School, is participating in a national stem cell transplant study at Northwestern University. The treatment offers a promising and possibly final chance to halt the progression of Barquist's aggressive case of Multiple Sclerosis (MS), but because the treatment is experimental, his participation is costly: estimated to set the Barquist family back nearly \$250,000, not covered by insurance.

The graduate of Bettendorf High School, St. Ambrose University and the University of Iowa has battled MS for more than a decade, undergoing several forms of aggressive treatment at some of the country's most renowned medical facilities. When they proved ineffective, his last hope to stop the disease's progression was to be accepted into the study at Chicago's Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, in the Division of Immunotherapy and Autoimmune Diseases (DIAD). Upon his acceptance, Barquist and his family learned that not only would insurance not cover the treatment, but that they would need to rent an apartment in Chicago for the treatment's six-week duration. Despite the mounting financial worries, the family knew the Northwestern study was their best chance. They decided to move forward.

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Barquist began an immune suppression treatment in September, and on October 4, doctors harvested 12.5 million stem cells, well above the minimum needed of two million. In true form, Barquist was an overachiever. Barquist is now undergoing intense chemotherapy, which will degrade his immune system to that of a newborn. MS causes the body's immune system to attack the material that surrounds nerves, damaging their ability to conduct signals. The Northwestern treatment essentially takes the immune system to its pre-MS level, and then Barquist's stem cells will be reinserted. So far, trials of this treatment reveal that in approximately 75 percent of cases<sup>1</sup>, patients' conditions have improved. Because this is a study, there are no guarantees of success.

### **Friends and Family Rally to Provide Financial and Emotional Support**

Friends, family and other supporters across the country are rallying to help the Barquist family, which includes son Will, age four, cover the cost of treatment. Fundraising, such as a silent auction, online donations and a local Iowa bank account, has helped the family raise \$30,000 to date.

Barquist's progress, including photos, can be tracked by "liking" the "Brian Barquist Journey" page on Facebook®. The page has more than 700 followers to date, including people Barquist does not know personally but who are sharing their own stem cell transplant success stories.

"We are so touched by the enormous amount of support we've received," says Barquist's wife, Dr. Stephanie (Rudish) Barquist, who is currently singlehandedly supporting the family with her local dental practice as she also balances school loans and costly equipment replacement expenses. "Brian touched so many lives as a teacher and coach, and we are so grateful to everyone who has contributed with thoughtful emails, prayers and donations."

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**How to Help**

Those interested supporting Barquist’s treatment with a donation can visit the “Brian Barquist Journey” page on Facebook or direct funds to Valley Bank, c/o Shannon Mandsager, 2020 E. Kimberly Road, Bettendorf, 52722.

**Division of Immunotherapy and Autoimmune Diseases (DIAD)**

More information about the Division of Immunotherapy and Autoimmune Diseases (DIAD) at Chicago’s Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine can be found at <http://www.stemcell-immunotherapy.org/>.

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