

Over the years, we all experience "life changing" events; some good, some bad. How we choose to respond to these events can help to shape and define us. For Kim, one of her more profound life changing events occurred in 1991 when, at the age of 20, she became a quadriplegic due to injuries suffered in an automobile accident.

Kim did not allow this disability to stop her. After receiving a Bachelor's degree in psychology and a Master's degree in Social Work, Kim dedicated her life to helping others. For years she served families working as a mental health counselor. Kim never imagined that something as seemingly harmless as a wound could alter her life's work in a way that even paralysis never could.



As a quadriplegic, one of the first things you are taught in rehab is how important it is to take care of your skin. Because you lack sensation, you don't know when you need to adjust the way you are sitting or lying down. If you don't take care of your skin, pressure sores can occur. Sores can be very dangerous for many reasons. The main reason is potential infection. If not properly cared for, it is even possible to die from pressure sores.

In December 2014, Kim's mom noticed a red mark on her tail bone. Kim was not aware that her wheelchair's cushion was not properly inflated which caused a sore to develop. They started watching it right away but it was too late. Less than a week later, Kim was admitted to the hospital because the wound became infected. Kim's health became critical and she was left fighting for her life when the wound became septic. Doctors performed several surgeries to remove the infected tissue.

When she was finally discharged from the hospital, she went home with a wound VAC connected to her and a PICC line in her arm. It took several months to regain her health and strength while receiving treatments and antibiotics to fight the infection and treat the wound. Unfortunately, the wound VAC didn't seem to be helping. For the next 15 months Kim and her medical team battled the infection in the wound, always seeming to take one step forward and another step back. Ultimately, Kim was forced resign from her job in order to focus on wound treatment, pressure relief, and infection prevention.

After nearly a year and a half of little to no progress, doctors became concerned that there could be a deeper infection in the bone that was preventing the wound from healing. Kim underwent a number of MRIs in hopes of finding answers. While the MRIs did not find any further infection, they did uncover something even more concerning. In May 2016, a large mass was discovered in Kim's lower intestine. Subsequent tests confirmed the mass to be a malignant colon cancer.

At this point, Kim's wound treatment went on the back burner and the focus became treating her cancer. In August 2016, Kim underwent surgery to have the mass removed and then began six grueling months of chemotherapy pills. Due to chemotherapy, her wound became even more vulnerable to infection and there was a huge risk that it could progress even further. Thankfully, while the wound did not heal, it did not get any worse during this time.

After being declared cancer free in February 2017, the priority and focus were once again directed back to healing Kim's wound. Doctors once again attempted a wound VAC for four weeks. Just as before, there was no progress in healing the wound. She was informed that she may need to undergo a more involved surgery in order to heal the wound. Kim was ready for something new.

Kim told her doctor that she would like to receive Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) since nothing else had worked in over two years. Her doctor was very open to the idea and referred her to a hospital for treatment. Unfortunately, insurance ruled that HBOT treatment for Kim was non-reimbursable, leading her to Sara's Garden.

She received a round of 40 Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy treatments at Sara's Garden. After only one week of treatments, the wound had decreased by 1 cm in all directions (inwards from every side and upwards from the depth of the wound.) Kim's doctors, nurses and mother were amazed at how well her wound responded to the oxygen treatments. One of her nurses said she had never seen a wound close up so fast in only on week's time. Her surgeon even commented that for being a wound, it was one of the healthiest looking wounds he had ever seen. He felt that it was no longer necessary to surgically repair the wound and that she should continue to receive HBOT and allow the wound to heal itself. Kim was astonished that something as simple as oxygen and pressure could heal the way it does.

Through all the challenges that Kim has faced, she has refused to allow these "life changing" events to become "life ending" ones. She has faced each and every challenge with a fantastic attitude and sense of purpose. Kim has said that she is definitely a believer in HBOT and can't wait to see what additional oxygen treatments will continue to do for her and help her to accomplish next.

No matter what you've been told, there is hope... for this and many other conditions. HBOT is treatment without drugs... without surgery... without pain.



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