



Marine' s story:  
I owe my life to research

## Description

# A survivor recounts how Leucan supported her throughout her illness

### Advertorial

During a beautiful day in June 2015, sixteen-year-old Marine noticed an abnormal growth in her neck. She put up with it for a few months, and then, no longer able to tolerate it, she decided it would be wise to go have it checked out at her local hospital.

Initially, the suspected cause was cat-scratch disease, an infectious bacterial illness transmitted through a cat scratch or bite that causes a lymphatic reaction. This wasn't too surprising, as Marine is a cat-lover and shares her environment with this normally harmless pet.

She was then prescribed antibiotics and took them for a long time, but the medication proved ineffective. The ugly bump persisted and had grown even more significantly. Another medical examination was required to further investigate the issue, so she went to a major hospital in downtown Montreal.

After radiography, medical imaging, a biopsy, and laboratory analysis, it wasn't until January 2016 when the battery of tests finally rendered its verdict: Marine learned that she had Hodgkin's Lymphoma, an abnormal lymphocyte (a type of white blood cell) cancer, that infiltrates and affects the lymph nodes.

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Because this new diagnosis came several months after the first consultation, the cancer had already reached stage 4, the most advanced level with the largest risk. Marine was not surprised – she was almost expecting this result as the chance of having this disease had been suggested during the medical testing and it loomed over her life like a dark cloud.



Despite her parents and little brother's grave concern, Marine was not scared. She focused all her energy and legendary positivity on healing and dealing with what would come next: five cycles of 21-day chemotherapy. After discussing and thinking about it with her family, she agreed and opted for an experimental treatment that would have less impact on her lungs instead of pursuing traditional treatment.

'After discussing and thinking about it with her family, she agreed and opted for an experimental treatment...'

She says she is proud to have contributed to advancing research. In addition to the difficulty she faced in losing her hair, she felt that the pain in her bones and side effects were much worse. On the personal and social side, she had to learn to live in the isolation forced upon her by this disease. As a young student, she was cut off from her classmates, her circle of friends, and had to refrain from making outside visits as much as possible. She had to protect herself against all risks of getting an infection because of her weak immune system.

Marine's teachers were of great help as they continued to provide her with education and ensured that she had the documents and homework required so that she could continue her studies, which she did with dogged determination, as she didn't want to lose any time. She finished high school on schedule and was very happy to complete her chemo on time to attend her graduation dance.

## Comforting help

During her stays at the hospital, Marine benefitted from **Leucan's** unwavering support as well as that of the volunteers who were always there when the need to talk arose. Not feeling alone and being able to share and talk about her worries and questions with people who understand made a big difference for her. She also appreciated being made to feel at home when a comfort kit was given to her during this part of her life in confinement. It was a great idea and it made her feel better!

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What helped her most in her battle was her two-time participation at **Camp Vol d'été Leucan-CSN** located at the Centre de plein air Le Saisonnier in Lac-Beauport. Here, close relatives can accompany children up to age 20 who are Leucan members and battling cancer.

Marine went alone the first time, but invited her overjoyed brother to join her during her second stay. An entire week of summer activities and spending time with young people of the same age who experienced and understood what she was going through was very beneficial for Marine, who now considers them as her second family. She has remained good friends with them ever since, and she regularly visits them when she goes to Quebec City.

## Her life's goal: To live

Now in her second year in Social Sciences at CEGEP, Marine is considering her options for the next stage of her studies. She is very interested in the field of communications, and as a spokesperson for Leucan, she has briefly explored, among other things, the world of radio and television interviews.

Marine is well aware of the importance of research and that without it, she might not be in the same good state of



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health she now enjoys. Not long ago, the five-year survival rate for Hodgkin's Lymphoma was only 15%. Thanks to advances in research, it is now almost 85%. Marine has participated in some of Leucan's fundraising activities to finance clinical research in paediatric oncology and to provide support services to affected children and their families. "Leucan helped me and I'm pleased to help them in return."

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When asked about her life goals, she said with conviction: "Enjoy life to the fullest, not miss out on any opportunities, and when one presents itself, I just want to go for it!"

## The Leucan Shaved Head Challenge at Alexis Nihon

Since the first event in 2001, the **Shaved Head Challenge** has persuaded 85,000 people to shave their heads to benefit children with cancer. For the third consecutive year, **Alexis Nihon**, a building owned and managed by **Cominar**, is proudly participating in the **18th annual Leucan Challenge in the Montreal-Laval region**. It will host the first shaving session on **Thursday, April 19 between noon and 3 pm at the Metro level**.

You can sign up or make a donation online by visiting [tetesrasees.com](https://tetesrasees.com) or onsite during the day of the activity. You will definitely have a chance to see Marine's contagious smile and be in awe of her eternal optimism.

*Image: courtesy of Leucan*

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8. levée de fonds
9. Shaved Head Challenge

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