

Dear Terry Lawson,

I want to tell you about a horribly painful decision I had to make about my 13-year-old daughter, Miranda. I had to decide, with my wife, whether to choose an operation that would remove six feet of Miranda's intestines.

It's something I thought you'd be interested in because you've made donations in the past to the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC). By the way, as someone who has inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) in the family, I want to thank you so much for your contributions.

It was a few months ago when we had to decide about the operation, but the trouble started when Miranda was 8. She began getting intense stomach aches and at times could not eat. At age 9, Miranda was diagnosed with Crohn's disease.

Like any 9-year-old, she had just wanted to be a normal kid. But now she was worrying about what she ate, about losing weight, and worrying about getting sick.

Over the next couple of years the pain and diarrhea became more and more severe. By age 12 the pain had become too unbearable and Miranda was living in perpetual agony.

Perhaps worst of all was the unfortunate change in Miranda's mood and outlook on life. Her sweet disposition dissolved into a gloomy, lethargic pool.

We tried everything. Powerful drug therapies, heavy doses of painkillers, potent antibiotics. Still, we could not bring the disease under control. Miranda was forced to grow up quickly. She showed great courage through all of this and I am so proud of her.

Then we came to the time of the decision. Miranda had been in the hospital for months, missing school, and she was getting worse. My wife and I were scared for her life.

We made the tough decision: Miranda's colon and part of her small intestine would be removed. She would live the rest of her life wearing an ostomy bag.

Can you imagine what it's like telling your child about a decision like this?

One of the worst things about Crohn's is that there's no cure. Even with surgery, the disease can return at any time. Next month. Next year. In 20 years. You live your life knowing you may go through the horror all over again.

In fact, now, after the surgery, Miranda has already developed a large, painful flesh wound resulting from Crohn's. A reminder that the disease is still with her.

However, I'm pleased to say that Miranda feels much better now and has regained her energy and enthusiasm for life. And now she's helping others who suffer from IBD.

This year, Miranda is serving as the Honourary Chair of our local CCFC Heel 'n' Wheel-a-Thon. It's inspiring to see how thousands of volunteers and pledge earners help the cause through this event in over 80 cities across the country. You can go to www.cafc.ca and see "CCFC in Your Community" to find out about this June event.

I also find it inspiring that you have chosen to donate and help find the cure. You have no idea how touched I am that people like you are here for us, helping to support medical research, and being part of the solution.

I ask you to think about the 200,000 adults, youth and children in Canada with IBD. For all of these people who endure so much pain, I hope you'll continue your support.

We need to continue funding medical research into the cause and cure of IBD. I hope in the near future no one will have to suffer how my daughter has suffered.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel Heppner".

Samuel Heppner

P.S. I really hope you'll continue your generous support. A donation of \$30, \$40, \$50 or whatever you can give, means so much to those who suffer from IBD and to their families.