



Linke Nel's inspiring leukemia battle part of Jeans for Genes day campaign

By Sean Thompson

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When Linke Nel was just 14 months old, her parents were told their daughter would not make her 2nd birthday.

Diagnosed with leukemia, the little girl from a rural South African town was quickly fighting for her life before doctors in her home country ran out of treatment options.

But instead of reeling from the devastating news, her mother Renee Nel trawled the internet to find a cure for her daughter's deadly condition.



Linke Nel was diagnosed with leukemia at just 14 months old. (Supplied)



Doctors in her home country of South Africa ran out of treatment options for her. (Supplied)

She emailed 130 doctors and hospitals around the world and got no reply until a message from Dr Luciano Dalla-Pozza arrived in her inbox.

The Westmead Hospital doctor and board member for the Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) offered to treat Linke and give her a chance at life.

"When you've been told your child is going to die, we couldn't accept that, and we vowed to fight with everything until the end," mum Renee told the TODAY Show.



The little girl and her family moved to Australia to help in her fight against leukemia. (Supplied)



Linke's parents were told their daughter wouldn't make her 2nd birthday. (Supplied)

"Moving was hard but when you're not given a choice, the only option is to give your child a chance at life. We just had to do it."

After arriving in Australia in 2014, the Nel family met 'Dr Luce' and the next day Linke was placed on a clinical trial and within a month she was in remission.

Linke's family including father Marco and brother Brandt were supported in their move to western Sydney by the CMCI, which is also behind the Jeans for Genes Day.



Dr Luciano Dalla-Pozza was the only one to reply to an email seeking help for Linke. (Supplied)



Linke is now six years old and well past the remission mark. (Supplied)

After finishing her treatments in 2015, Linke recently celebrated her 6th birthday and enrolled at Penrith Christian School.

Linke is one of several young faces leading this year's campaign, with CMCI's head of fundraising Andrew Kelly saying she was living proof of the benefits of research.

"One in 20 children are born with a genetic disease of birth defect, and it's important we allow the Australian audience to understand that prevalence," Mr Kelly told TODAY.



Linke with her father Marco, brother Brandt and mum Renee. (Supplied)



The Nel family is urging people to donate on Jeans for Genes day. (Supplied)

"Linke's story is remarkable but unfortunately it's all too common. The treatment she received comes from research, that's what we do."

Renee said research was the reason her daughter was still alive today.

"We very much feel that research is vital, saves lives and makes a difference. If not for that trial she (Linke) wouldn't be here today."

[To find out more visit jeansforgenes.org.](http://jeansforgenes.org)