

Full of Love, and Hope and the Colour Red, Your Girl, Eva

Simon Jones, BSc, BPHE^{a,b}

^aUBCMJ Staff Writer

^bVancouver Fraser Medical Program 2011, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Eva Dien Brine Markvoort was born with cystic fibrosis, the most common fatal genetic disease in Canada. Eva, along with over 3,000 other children and young adults across Canada, suffered through the disabling symptoms of a disease that affects multiple organ systems in the body but has its most devastating effects on the lungs.¹ Cystic fibrosis clogs the lungs with mucous making each breath a struggle to survive. On March 27, 2010, Eva passed away from complications of this disease, just days shy of her 27th birthday.

In her life, Eva was an icon of strength as she publicly documented her fight against the fate of an incurable genetic disease. In her death, she leaves behind a legacy of a woman who knew the significance of love and the importance of organ donation.

Eva grew up in New Westminister, British Columbia as a girl with a magnetic personality and dramatic flair that drew her to the performing arts.² Beautiful and vivacious, Eva never veered away from playing a leading role. Little did she know that her biggest role would come from revealing her personal account of life in a battle with cystic fibrosis. Eva's voyage into the spotlight began four years ago as she started a private blog intending to keep in touch with others suffering from cystic fibrosis. She named her blog *65 Red Roses*, which is a malapropism for children trying to pronounce cystic fibrosis, with the addition of her favourite colour red.² Soon Eva opened her blog to the public and began chronicling the intimate details about her struggles living with cystic fibrosis, often in the form of poetry, stories, or pictures. "*I'm drowning in the medications,*" Eva wrote in her last post, highlighting her willingness to share and engage with her captive audience. "*I can't breathe, every hour, once an hour, I can't breathe. Something has to change.*" Eva's blog would eventually receive over one million views, expose people around the world to a woman living in the face of death, and show that an undying hope can be sustained by surrounding yourself with, what she referred to as, "*Love, Love, Love.*"

Eva's fearless story would ultimately be the subject of an award-winning documentary that would be seen in Canada, the

United States, and as far away as Poland.³ Named *65_Redroses* after her blog, this would not just be a story about a sick girl but a journey into the unlikely friendships that Eva developed as she awaited a double lung transplant. The film would end with Eva successfully receiving new lungs and a new start on life, but it was through her journey that Eva was able to voice a greater message about the importance of organ donation. Eva's powerful message had purposeful impact as organ donation in Canada tripled after the documentary was aired nationally.



In this photo: Eva Dien Brine Markvoort

Two years after receiving her new lungs, Eva was diagnosed with chronic organ rejection. Surrounded by friends, family, and the thousands of cards she had received from her fans around the world, Eva would take her last breath at Vancouver General Hospital while awaiting a second double lung transplant. Eva will be remembered as a daughter, sister, friend, fighter, activist, University of Victoria graduate, Queen's Jubilee Medal winner, and a Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Doug Summerhayes Award winner.² Eva once wrote, "*A mark on the world. A difference. Some proof that I mattered. That when my body left this world*

my soul had made its imprint."² In telling her story of love and hope in a time of struggle, and by raising awareness about the importance of organ donation, Eva can be rest assured that she has forever left her imprint.

Eva's blog can be found at 65redroses.livejournal.com and the *65_Redroses* documentary at www.65redroses.com.³

REFERENCES

1. Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Patient Data Registry Report, 2007. Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Available from: http://www.cysticfibrosis.ca/assets/files/pdf/CPDR_ReportE.pdf.
2. Eva Markvoort. *65 Red Roses: Thoughts on Living with Cystic Fibrosis*. Vancouver, BC: Livejournal.com; [updated 2010 June 13; cited 2010 July 19]. Available from: <http://www.65redroses.livejournal.com>.
3. *65_redroses*. *65_redroses reviews and awards page* [homepage on the internet]. Vancouver, BC: Good Company Communications; 2006-2010 [updated 2010 July 13; Cited 2010 July 26]. Available from: http://www.65redroses.com/?page_id=17.