

My name is Ewan Laplante and at 12 years old I was diagnosed with Dyskeratosis Congenita. I initially had no idea what a genetic condition was or all the medical details that would encompass staying on top of this condition. For me, I had seen what DC can do to people with both my aunt and uncle passing away from pulmonary fibrosis and I was terrified I would follow the same path. The daunting prospect of not knowing what would happen to my life was terrifying for a middle schooler who was trying to be like everyone else whose worries were only playing sports and getting better at Fortnite.

Thankfully, my life didn't come to a screeching halt; instead, it was just reorganized. I was determined to not let this disease define me in any way. Spending time driving and showing up to various medical appointments meant that missing school was a regular occurrence. To combat this, I became well versed in communicating with my teachers about when I would be absent so I could stay on top of homework and tests. Despite these setbacks I was extremely successful in school finishing with a 4.4 GPA taking rigorous courses including 10 AP classes which granted me a spot at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo for electrical engineering. I pushed on playing soccer despite worries about my blood counts, not only competing but dominating in my games. I became my high school JV captain and earned a spot on Varsity scoring against our rival school in one of my first games. I was the top scorer this past season with my club, the Cardiff Sockers, winning league and state cup. I plan on continuing playing in college at the club level. I even learned how to play the bagpipes winning multiple competitions and playing with one of the best bands in the world. In doing all of this, I've proven to myself that I don't have to live in fear of the condition I have and that I have the power to defy what is thought to be my own limits.

I want to show other kids with DC that there is hope for them to achieve goals no matter what their limitations are. I've tried to help patients with DC by being a part of bone marrow donor drives and I plan to be a part of a clinical trial in Cincinnati next summer to possibly create a cure for one of the effects of DC.

The Nancy Cornelius Scholarship would help me immensely with my college expenses with the cost of textbooks and the cost of potentially studying abroad for my major. Electrical engineering can become expensive with new powerful software needing to be run on higher processing computers and even buying new hardware to put into circuits. Now at almost 18 years old, this scholarship will help me achieve dreams that I did not know would be possible 6 years ago.