

AGAINST US, THE ODDS DON'T STAND A CHANCE.

I was 12 when I started having seizures. At first, they came only at night. But then they came all of the time. Sometimes, as many as 20 in a row.

The doctors, who were many, concluded I had epilepsy. And life as I knew it stopped. I could no longer play sports. I became introverted, constantly fearful of my next seizure, a social outcast.

The anguish inside of me did not pass. But the years did.

I was working the nightshift that New Year's Eve back in 2001, when Nadia, my wife, called about Alex, our 1-year-old son. "I'm not sure," she said flatly, "but I think Alex just had a seizure." I rushed home.

A few days later, more seizures struck.

The doctors diagnosed Alex with something called tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC), a genetic disease that causes tumors to grow in different vital organs, like the brain, eyes, heart, kidneys, lungs and skin. (The truth is, I had no idea what tuberous sclerosis was, let alone how to pronounce it.)

Currently, there is no cure.

Two weeks after Alex's heartbreak, I developed a blood clot, the first of five. I was hospitalized and underwent a series of tests. The results took my

breath away.

I did not have epilepsy. It turns out I never did. I have tuberous sclerosis complex. Exactly what Alex has.

Did I pass this on to my son? I could not bear to consider the likelihood that I had.

Denial was not an option. During the next 12 months, Alex had an onslaught of seizures. One—the one that nearly took him—lasted two-and-a-half hours, an eternity. He was hospitalized and put on life-support.

That was six years ago. Today, Alex and I are very much alive, bonded in a way too deep, too expansive, to describe in words.

I did not begin speaking until I was 4. Alex is 7 and still non-verbal. Many say Alex likely will never talk. But I believe that one day he will.

With all my heart, I love you, Alex. And, even though you cannot speak those words to me, I see you saying it. In your eyes, I see you saying, I love you, too.



Mark Martin and son, Alex

WITH A CURE. WHERE OUR STORY MUST END.

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