



By Janice Kua (right with sister Joni)

I was diagnosed as having Thalassaemia when I was 2 months old and started having blood transfusion then. Now, I am 24 years old going to 25 and, I am still undergoing blood transfusion once every 3 weeks and it is usually 2 packs of blood.

Other than having Thalassaemia, I also suffer from Rheumatoid Arthritis on most of my joints. My affected joints are my left elbow, left forth finger, left hip, right knee, and both ankles. My arthritis affects my physical ability very badly compared to Thalassaemia. There is no physical disadvantage being a Thalassaemic. From how I see it, the only thing involved in being a Thalassaemic is the fact that we have to go for blood transfusion once every three weeks, taking medication and having subcutaneous injection 5 times a week to get rid of the overloaded iron in my body.

Rheumatoid arthritis has affected me in many different ways. First of all I used to suffer from a lot of pain until I went for a knee and hip replacement. I was wheelchair bound for a year when I was 12 years old. Later on I managed to get back on my 2 feet, and was able to walk with some pain. Four years ago, my situation deteriorated. I went for a hip and knee replacement in September 2007 and am now recovering from the surgery and undergoing rehabilitation treatment.

However, I have not allowed my medical condition to limit my life activities. I live my life to the fullest. Even when wheelchair bound, I attended school. My only regret is that I was not able to achieve my best of a 3 years degree course in Music, Media and Event Management in London, even after doing badly in school. I live on my own and do everything there due to bureaucratic rules that do not allow for special needs. Still, I am determined to achieve my best in life. Even though I missed loads of classes when I had to be admitted into hospital for blood transfusions (days long gone by when day-care facilities do not exist) and when I lost my mobility, it has never occurred to me to stop my education. I am currently studying the 2nd year by myself, as well as commuting by public transport to and from university and also to and from hospital for my treatment. The journey to the hospital from where I live takes about 1 hour by London underground. Even when my arthritis worsened and I was in a lot of pain, I still manage to cope with living on my own, studying as well as working part time. I look forward to finishing my degree soon and be an asset to the world.

I do not see my life as suffering. I do not see my life as any different from any others. It is the only life I know. As I see it, everyone has hurdles in our lives, big and small. It is not what sort of hurdles that you are presented with but how you manage and overcome them. I am very privileged to have so many people around me, who care and support me to the fullest. In fact, I feel that having to live with thalassaemia and deal with society has made me stronger in character and more equipped to deal with life's challenges.