

Live to Tell

“I was on my way to heaven when they gave me Xigris. I’m testament to the fact that Xigris works.”

STEVE SISNEY

Dr. Jeanne Morgan works in a hospital, is married to a physician and, as a clinical psychologist, understands how the human mind and body work. But the tired feeling that kept her at home one weekend in October 2003 was much more sinister than a simple cold or flu. Within

hours, Morgan’s vital organs began to shut down. Unbeknownst to her, she had severe sepsis, a life-threatening blood infection caused by bacteria, viruses or other infectious microorganisms. Fortunately, doctors saved her life when they gave her Xigris, an Eli

Lilly drug that has its roots in the OMRF laboratories of Drs. Charles Esmon (left) and Fletcher Taylor. Recently, Morgan shared her life-and-near-death experience with **Shari Hawkins**.

When did you realize that you were sick?

It was frightening, because I got so sick so fast. I thought I was just tired and overworked. My husband was traveling, but friends checked on me over the weekend. No one had any idea the extent of my illness. In fact, I have no recollection of the entire weekend. But when my husband got home that Monday evening, he rushed me to the emergency room. By 4:00 the next morning, my lungs, heart, liver and kidneys were no longer functioning. They thought I was pretty much dead. A do-not-resuscitate order was attached to my chart, and everyone just waited for me to die.

But you’re obviously very much alive now. What happened?

The infectious disease doctor ordered Xigris for me. It was a fairly new drug, but he knew it was my only hope. After one dose, my vital signs started going back up. It was still touch-and-go for a while, but Xigris worked.

What did you think when you learned that this drug had its beginnings at OMRF?

It gave me a greater appreciation for OMRF and the scientists behind the research. In my profession, I know a lot about research. And I also know that many times, scientists get little or no feedback. Or they remain low-profile, and the drug company gets all the attention. But Xigris saved my life. And I’m here because of what Drs. Esmon and Taylor do and have done. If we didn’t have breakthroughs like those being developed at OMRF, we wouldn’t have miracle drugs like Xigris. And without it, I wouldn’t be here. You’re saving lives.

How has your experience changed you?

Strange as it may seem, I think it’s been good. It was touching to feel so loved by the people in my life. People of different religions and all walks of life prayed for me, and many kept a two-week vigil at my bedside. The lesson here is to cherish the time that you have. Be intentional about making time for those things you want to do “someday.” Create opportunities to spend time with family and friends. It’s the kind of wisdom we always hear from other people, and it’s so true. The most important things in life are family and friends—the people you care about and those who care about you.

