

04 September

Hey All...

I first want to thank everyone for your prayers and encouragement through everything we've been through, and ask that you continue to pray for Sarah as her tiny little body is sooo busy playing catch up. I am finally feeling well enough to at least give you all a bit of an update...

Sarah Briann was born on Monday, August 27th at 6:57 am. We had been re-admitted to Tacoma General the Friday before. Sunday night/early Monday morning I had been feeling pretty lousy and the medicine that had been keeping the contractions at bay all weekend had stopped working. My stomach started noticeably swelling up and i started throwing up quite a bit of fluid. They quickly took some blood tests, and knew from those that we had to be taken in immediately for an emergency Caesarian Section to get Sarah out. Turns out I had some massive internal hemorrhaging, which is why my stomach filled up like a ripe watermelon. I also had a huge abrupture in the placenta...and Sarah was no longer getting the nutrients she needed to survive. Then they say I had a rare case of DIC...which has something to do with your body's ability or lack of ability to coagulate your blood. I lost a massive amount of blood on the operating table, and there was still a huge amount of blood sitting loose in my abdomen.

They took Sarah right over to the newborn intensive care unit (NICU) and they took me up to the ICU. Brian had arrived at the hospital at around 6:45 am...the doctor told him to wait in my hospital room and assured him that someone would be in to get him in five minutes. He sat there for long three hours, waiting. He knew the stakes and he knew everything that had happened and that there was a chance that both Sarah and I could die with all the complications that had already taken place...so he was sitting there thinking that he had lost both of us...when the nurse finally came around to getting him. That was just horrible!

In the ICU, it was pretty touch and go. I believe I got eight blood transfusions along with platelets. My body had lost so much blood, it just wasn't taking to the transfusions and the doctors didn't know that I would make it. With a whole lot of praying...my body's blood counts got a bit better and they were able to release me to the Perinatal Special Care Unit. They had to give me more blood upon arrival down here, and that took a couple of days to register to the good, but it did in fact take. The entire week was full of fevers, nausea, and negative appetite...and with no appetite, i couldn't take my pain medication...it was a vicious circle. A good portion of my body is full of purple bruising from the DIC, blood hemorrhaging, effects of the transfusions, and a huge hematoma. The hematoma will cause my abdominal pain to continue for quite a while, but the pain medication is at least keeping me sane. This afternoon, I believe I get moved to one of the normal post birthing rooms until either Friday or Saturday, which is when I may be released if my fever and pain level both stay at bay.

As for Sarah, she is sooooo beautiful!!!! She weighed in at 1 lb, 9 ounces when born and 11.5 inches long...that weight went down as they normally do...but as of yesterday it's back up to the birth weight. We've had a good week with her. Had three scares though already. I am told time and time again that this will be a roller coaster ride of up's and down's because she was just born so early. The first was her intestines weren't working as they needed to...might need surgery, but her intestines have done pretty good in fixing themselves and continue to do better and better. Second scare is that she has a vein that naturally shuts down when they get a little older in the womb...but now that she's breathing oxygen so early on in her life, the vein is leaking into her lungs, and this somehow causes a heart murmur. So, they will be doing surgery for that tomorrow afternoon...I guess this is a fairly common surgery and most babies make it through just fine, so we'll be praying. Thirdly...today is her first brain scan...to see if she is bleeding. There are four levels of bleeding, levels one and two normally work themselves out

and levels three and four take surgery and/or cause damage to the brain, which could be awful. I would soooooo much appreciate any and all prayers for her vein surgery tomorrow and that her brain scan today shows no blood. She is just the smallest sweetest thing and I just pray that she gets a good chance at a healthy life.

Brian, Sarah, and I thank you all for your prayers and all the encouragement we've received throughout this entire experience. We feel the love and all the support in huge amounts and can not thank you all enough!

26 September:

Well...Another good couple of days for Sarah. She was sleeping soundly yesterday when I went in, till the nurse abruptly woke her up so we could do her care...she wasn't too excited about being woke up, but she did good...she was looking all around with her eyes wide open and just let us do our thing while she wiggled all around. Her oxygen requirements are staying right around 60 some percent. That's not great, but it's still better than her initial requirements. The doctor said both the brain scan and the chest x-ray came back ok. Neither showed any sign of increased trauma, which is really good. The brain scan hasn't been fully reviewed yet to see if the bleeding between the brain and her skull has been absorbed completely, but at least they said it hasn't gotten any worse. So, more good days to come I hope! Another chest x-ray today, then again on Monday along with another brain scan...unless they change the orders between now and then. That's all the news for now. Hope this finds all of you well! I'm still working on the pictures... I promise to send them soon!

03 October

My little angel is still doing her thing! Her oxygen level was at 38% when I left the hospital this evening. So it continues to come down! Yahooooo! There is a new doctor at the hospital each day. There are six of them, and they rotate on 24 hour shifts between St. Joes and Tacoma General. So today's doctor...I asked him a ton of questions...like when they are going to wean Sarah off of her steroids and if there is an oxygen percentage they are looking for in order to do that. Also, asked about the next brain scan, when it would be and how long they were planning to continue the seizure medication if the brain scan showed no signs of the initial bleeding. Asked too about the ventilator...like, what oxygen level they are looking for in order to take her off of that and put her back on the respirator. So...here is what today's doc said...

As for the steroids, they started weaning her off of those today. He said she was given just a super small dose twice a day (ordered by one of the other doctors) every day since late last Wednesday. Most infants don't respond to such a small dose. But she responded beautifully! Today's doc said he would have given her a larger dose, but knowing that she reacted so well to such a small dose, he said is encouraging. And, knowing the risks associated with this drug...the small dose makes long term effects much less likely.

They skipped the brain scan this week, but have one scheduled for next week. So we'll know if there have been any changes in her brain at all.

This doc said they plan to leave her on the ventilator as long as possible. Another doc said they would try to get her off of it in the next couple weeks depending on how she does. So, I guess that depends on the doctor that is on staff at the time. But today's doc was very encouraging and said a lot of good things about the ventilator. So, we'll see on that one.

All the nurses come over to check on Sarah even when they aren't assigned to her. They call her the little escape artist. They wrap her up tight in her little blanket, and within five minutes, she's out. It's the funniest thing. She loves her little feet and hands massaged with lotion...and she loves to look all around. She's a night owl...they say she's up all night...happy as can be, but just looking around at everything.

Well, that's it for now! Let's pray for more good to come and for Sarah to grow and heal up her little lungs. Thanks for always hearing her story and for the prayers you send out to her.

Take care!

10 October:

Well hello all!

We've been blessed with another great week... Those are hard to come by in the NICU, so I am very thankful! We got some not so great news yesterday...but I am just thankful for each day I get to spend with her.

Sarah spent some time on the steroids over the past couple of weeks to help her lung tissue recover from the tremendous amount of damage the oxygen has been causing and also to help her breath easier. The steroids kept her oxygen requirements fairly low, which is good. When coming off the steroids, the doctors explained that her oxygen requirements would come back up some. Since she's been off, she's stayed between 30% and 50% required oxygen (the lower the better - 21% is perfect - that would mean that she's breathing totally on her own...whereas 100% would be the extreme high, meaning she's not breathing on her own at all - Before the steroids she was at 80% and on the steroids she's been in the high 20's). Being in the 50% range over the last couple of days scared me when I first saw it, but the doctors said this is normal and so far she hasn't been creeping up as she had been before the steroids were administered, so that's good. They think she will need another round of the steroids before she's out of there. But they will wait until she has grown a bit before giving her that next round.

Two days ago, Sarah got another ultra sound of her brain. They wanted to look at the area of bleeding she had between her skull and brain. The doctors were hopeful that this bleeding would be absorbed by the body and that it wouldn't cause any lasting damage. Yesterday though, after reviewing the latest brain scan, the doctor said the radiologists are concerned...which made my heart sink. They are now certain that the bleeding was actually in the brain tissue vice on the edge of the brain. This means some level of brain damage. The doctor was very hopeful though...in that when there is brain damage at this early age, the body is still growing new tissue and the body will compensate for the damaged area. The damage could be minimal...we just don't know. It's on the left side of the brain, in the area that works her motor skills. As soon as she is strong enough to handle the stress of going through an MRI and/or cat scan, they will know more. That should happen in a month or two. This is extremely rare...the doctor that was in today has been there for 25 years and has never seen a bleed like this. Leave it up to Sarah to be different...already causing havoc! I have a good feeling that the damage is minimal. She is just such a motor girl always moving around and she just seems so physically energetic...more energetic than any other baby in there and she was born the earliest out of all of them...so I think she's doing pretty dang good! She may develop her major motor skills a little later in life - but hey at least the news wasn't completely grim.

I have learned to be thankful for each day, even if we get such news as possible brain damage. We're just so fortunate that she's still with us and that she's doing so good and is so strong! Two

weeks ago, I was witness to one little boy losing the battle, he was born at 31 weeks. This week, a little girl who was born at 24 weeks gestation just a few days before Sarah...that little girl lost her fight last night. It is the hardest thing to see the family members mourning their loss. I can only imagine how they are feeling. It just makes me appreciate what i've got, and each and every day that Sarah looks up at me or grabs my finger...I am just so completely grateful.

That is all for now, it's past my bed time! I hope all of you are out and about enjoying life as we should... Take care and thank you so much for keeping Sarah in your prayers!

12 October

Well I was hoping I wouldn't have any more updates until next week...but today was a bit scary for Sarah...

When i got to Sarah's bedside today, I checked her out...she was sleeping soundly, cute as ever. Next i checked her oxygen levels...and about passed out! Unfortunately it's not the good kind of 'passed out'. She was at 100% required oxygen, so she wasn't breathing on her own at all. I frantically looked for her nurse...no where in site. Finally the nurse came over, and i asked her what the deal was with Sarah's oxygen level???? The nurse said there was no reason for it going up that she could tell, just that it had gone up pretty quickly throughout the morning. I said "There MUST be a reason for it going up this fast!" But she didn't have any explanations. Some history here - the little boy that died, he died cause his lungs couldn't handle that amount of oxygen, so when i see her anywhere near 100%, I panic.

So, I went and talked to the doctor right away who said it was probably just because she had been weaned completely off of the steroids. I told him i didn't buy that and did my best to convince him that there must be some other reason, we just need to find it. I tried brain storming, but the doctor just kept saying that he will probably just have to readminister the steroids starting this afternoon. Then he went on to remind me how the steroids could damage her neurological system and how that wouldn't be good on top of that bleed in her brain, but that he couldn't leave her at 100% for long. I wouldn't leave his office...so he finally agreed to look at her chart and he said one reason may be that her IV was taken out, so her sedation and pain meds are now being administered via her feeding tube instead of the IV, and the drugs don't get absorbed as much via a feeding tube, so he decided to up her dose of drugs. So, that's one explanation. Next he ordered a chest x-ray...the results are quick, maybe 30 minutes tops. So, once he got those results - he came back with the most probable reason...her right lung had partially collapsed some time this morning...and that would increase her oxygen needs for sure.

Sarah has had a partially collapsed lung once before not long after she was born, and it worked itself out and re-inflated over time - so I'm very hopeful that she will recover. But it was a pretty scary day...Sarah did better while i was there...she had been at 100% for a few hours and shortly after i arrived, they were able to gradually wean her down to 60% which is where she remained. I just called in and she is right at 50% now. They will take another x-ray at 6 am tomorrow morning, so we'll see if this fixed itself that quickly.

Ok...that's it for now! Here's to hoping she recovers quickly so that oxygen doesn't do too much damage! I hope you all have a great weekend! Thanks, as always, for your prayers... Tonya

October 16th

Well, for once we've got nothing but GOOD news!!! When i arrived at the hospital today, Sarah's vitals were good...and the nurse - first thing - asked me if i wanted to hold her! So, naturally i jumped on the opportunity! I sat there with her in my arms for a good three hours. She was wide awake at first just looking all around, then before long she totally zonked out, mouth open, drooling like a champ! This was the first time I've been able to hold her, and it was awesome. On my way out, I stopped and talked with the doctor...asked him to show me today's x-ray and we compared it to yesterdays - Little Miss Sarah did awesome over night - all but one little tiny spot of her lungs have re-inflated!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Yaaahhooooo!!!!!! So happy with today - Now i think i am going to go to bed and zonk out myself...I'm a tired girl...all these up's and down's really take it out of ya! Glad to pass along some good news for once though... Thanks as always for all your prayers!

October 22nd

Our little sunshine just keeps on shining! She is doing so good!!!! Sarah's oxygen requirements were so low the past few days 21%-23% that I got a call this morning with the nurse telling me to get on in there cause they were taking out her breathing tube! So that was our big day today. She now has a tiny mask over her nose which provides her some oxygen, but for the most part she is breathing on her own. What a switch of emotions from a week ago. Praise God - seriously - for this miracle! It was pretty funny today...the nurses had the incubator hood raised and they kept putting their stuff on her bed, like to change out her breathing tube, face tape, etc... It was hilarious - every time they would set something down - she would knock it off the bed. We were laughing so hard - cause once it hits the ground, they have to go get a new clean one - so constantly the other nurses were having to go fetch everything all over again and she just had a look on her face like she knew just what she was doing. At one point - every nurse in the room was there watching this transition and laughing at Sarah's ornery self...she is so loved there. I hope you all had a great weekend... More good to come I hope!

October 29th, 2007

Hey...nothing but good news from this end!!!

Sarah has her second eye exam this week...eyes can be a bit scary with micro preemie's as they are born so dang early as well as the possible damage from all that oxygen, but from the first visit - the doc says things look great! So, we hope for the same good report this week. She had another brain ultrasound and things look exactly as they did two weeks ago...the bleed hasn't gotten worse, but it hasn't been absorbed any either. So, now we wait for the MRI/CT when she's big enough to handle that...in a month or two they say. Over the weekend her oxygen levels stayed down around 29%, which is pretty good. She's done so well over the last week or so that they have moved her now to a less critical room, it's still within the NICU - but for them to decide she's not only well enough now - but will also continue to do well enough for this new room is some awesome news! I think that's it for now...time to get ready so i can go see my little munchkin...I hope you all have a great week!

October 30th

Here are a few new pictures of Sarah and I... She's doing awesome! Got moved to a new bed today because she's now retaining her own body heat all by herself. She was completely off the breathing machine for almost two hours while I held her tonight and her oxygen saturation levels in her blood just sky rocketed...which is unheard of without the breathing machine on - meaning...she was breathing completely on her own and was not needing ANY oxygen at all - for almost two hours!!! The nurses were amazed... She would have kept right on going if they would have let her! She tries out the next breathing machine in two to three days, and once she's got that one down - she gets moved to the nursery upstairs....which is the final step before she gets to come home!! I can't believe she'll actually be coming home...amazing what she's battled through and how she's just kept right on fighting!!







November 6th

Well...the day has finally come - Miss Sarah is now over 4 pounds!!!! Yesterday she made the big trek to the nursery upstairs - what they call the 'Intermediate Care Unit'. Brian for the first time ever - got to hold his little girl and hear her cry and Sarah looked up at him with her big brown eyes as she held his fingers...she looked like a whole new baby from when he'd last been in there. He's been either working overtime or sick, so he hasn't seen her for over a month. He was a pretty happy daddy! Today - she has been breathing room air (no extra oxygen) all day!!! This is apparently unheard of, to move to room air this quickly and for this length of time. Her eye appointment went well late last week...her eyes have nearly totally matured, and he doesn't believe she will have any trouble with her eye sight, as preemies often do. The doctor couldn't believe it...for an infant to be born this early and have her eyes mature so quickly is unheard of. So, all in all - we are one lucky set of parents! I believe the next big hurdle is getting her to drink from a bottle; we should start trying that this week or next. Once she's got that down - it's smooth sailing...just watching her grow until the day she gets to come home!

I sent this out on Saturday, but the shipyard kicked it back to me. So, I'm going to try again! We're on our way to go get our girl!!!!!!!!!!!!

03 December 2007

Here's the latest picture! We get to bring our little girl home on Monday (this will be day 99 in the hospital!!)...it will be a long day watching 'go home' videos, learning infant CPR, learning the new monitoring system she will be sent home on, etc. But SUPER stoked to get her home! This weekend has been a poor attempt to get the house ready, but we can settle things in next week. Sarah had an MRI done on her brain last Thursday afternoon. We got the results from that test about an hour ago. We didn't learn too much that we didn't already know. There is still a pocket of blood between the brain and the skull, but it is slowly being absorbed. Unfortunately the brain tissue in that area is definitely showing signs of damage. We won't know the exact effects until she's older. It is on the left side of the brain, in the motor skills area...so it could be that she just learns to walk a little later than most, or something else barely

noticeable...we will just keep praying that it didn't do any significant damage. I will be sure to keep in touch with photos once we get her home and settled in! Hope you all enjoyed the snow this weekend!! Tonya

