



# LETHBRIDGE HERALD

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## **Dealing with an incurable disease**

Jackson, Anne-Marie

Local TV reporter helping raise awareness for Crohn's, colitis

By ANNE-MARIE JACKSON

Lethbridge Herald

Kaella Carr has a seven-inch scar across her stomach to remind her of the surgery that forced doctors to remove three feet of bowel and half her bladder after being diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease in 2004.

Her recovery took more than 40 days, a relatively short time compared with other individuals, and now that her health is stable, she is focused on gaining awareness for the incurable disease.

Carr, a reporter for CFCN, attended the annual M&M Meat Shops Crohn's and Colitis Fundraiser Saturday to help raised more than \$3,000 for medical research for inflammatory bowel disease.

"When I had my surgery in November, I think it shook me up about how serious this can be," said Carr. "(Research) is huge. I pretty much live at the doctor's and I will have to live with this for the rest of my life. Information is key."

Unlike colitis, which is restricted to the colon, Crohn's affects any part of the gastric intestinal tract, from the mouth to the anus, by causing the intestinal tissue to become inflamed.

Medical experts classify Crohn's and colitis as two forms of inflammatory bowel disease which is commonly diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 25 or 45 and 55. Symptoms include immobilizing abdominal pain, cramping, fatigue and diarrhea.

It is not uncommon for individuals diagnosed with Crohn's disease to endure a minimum of three surgeries in their lifetime.

"The worst thing about the surgery is that (the doctors) don't know what they're going to do until you're under (anesthetic)," said Carr. "Basically, you could wake up and they could have removed your entire small intestine. It depends how bad the infection is."

Crohn's causes the immune system to essentially attack itself and inflammation limits the ability for the colon to absorb the nutrients necessary for proper growth. Carr must undergo testing once a week to regulate her white blood cell count and receive B12 shots to ensure she has enough antibodies to avoid infection.

Most patients will use steroids or anti-inflammatory medication daily to avoid flare-ups.

"The anti-inflammatories that I am on now work great for me but it doesn't work for everyone, and it won't work forever," said Carr. "Soon your body will become immune to the medication, so you have to try something else or go for another surgery. Eventually, I have come to terms with the fact that, my entire small bowel will be removed."

Inflammatory bowel disease also causes problems with child birth, increases the risk of colon cancer and requires a strict dietary regimen to avoid inflammation. Most people suffering from Crohn's cannot consume lactose products, which can inevitably cause osteoporosis from lack of nutrients needed to build strong bones.

"IBD literally controls your life," said Carr. "I got involved in the fundraiser because it effects me, my family and friends and I want other people to know about it because one day it could affect them."

For Carr, research is the key to finding a solution that can ease her day-to-day struggle.

The Lethbridge chapter of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada's 18th annual M&M Meat Shops Charity Barbecue will help in the search for a cure for inflammatory bowel disease.

Residents unable to attend the barbecue can make a donation to the Be A Star campaign at the M&M Meat Shop, 225 12 St. N.

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada also provides information on inflammatory bowel disease to patients, their families, health professionals and the general public. For more information visit [www.ccfc.ca](http://www.ccfc.ca).

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