

Cristina's Story

As most of my friends might guess, the decision to run the British 10k London Run for **TB Alert** doesn't come as a surprise.

About a year ago, I thought I had it all: got married on Valentine's Day, moved in our lovely flat, started a new job... but life is never simple. It throws challenges at you just when you thought you had it all planned. And that's what happened to me. I got up one morning and left for work. There was nothing special about that 31st of March. Or so I thought. I got out of bed at the sound of the alarm, had my morning coffee and headed for work. I might have even got upset with the train that's always late, or the Internet that always drops when you need it the most on a busy morning in the office. Nevermind, I said to myself...

"Nevermind" is what I also said when that persistent cough that I had for months came back, stronger than ever. Nevermind... I am busy... to busy to worry... to busy to go to the doctor...

NO! Do mind! Do worry! Do GO to the DOCTOR! But unfortunately for me at the moment, I was like you, like every other busy young person. Worrying about health was the last thing on my agenda, and I would not even consider that something might be wrong. Until something was very wrong, and an ambulance took me to the hospital, coughing up blood and asking myself *"Why me?! Why now?! I just got married! Life is not fair! I don't want to die!!"*

This is the story of how I found out I had TB and how this has changed the way I see things.

I never thought something like that could happen to me. I had a healthy life style, have been pretty sporty and never smoke a cigarette in my life. I was not meant to have TB! But Tuberculosis, like many other diseases doesn't differentiate, it just hits!

It took a long time to have a diagnosis, and although the first reaction of the doctors was to say "TB", only after months the tests came to a result. And to make things worse, although I had already started the treatment for TB, in my case, I was infected with a multidrug resistant form of TB, which meant the treatment so far didn't work properly and had to be changed. Instead of a 6 months treatment I was given a 12 months treatment, which I finished just before I ran the 10k.

I don't want to scare anybody, or to make people feel sorry. No, I just want to raise awareness.

In my case, the "coughing up blood" episode came earlier than in many cases of TB. Normally, you would have this symptom when the disease is really advanced and your lungs already damaged.

TB doesn't kill. It is not knowing that you have TB that kills over 2 million people a year.

And it is in our hands to go to the doctor when we feel something might be wrong: a persistent cough, a permanent state of fatigue, waves of sweat at night time, or losing weight for no reason, should make us query whether there is something wrong with us.

I would like to thank to all the doctors and nurses from St. Thomas's Hospital in London who helped me from the very first day when I got there, scared and not knowing anything about this disease. Besides the doctors, I found all the leaflets and brochures published by TB Alert to be extremely useful, as they explained and made me understand even more what I was dealing with and that as long as I took my treatment, everything would be fine.

Thank you to my sponsors who joined me in my quest to raise some money that will help fight against this disease, that still kills so many people. It means a lot to me - I've been there, and I know how it feels to know that you are carrying a deadly illness, and it is up to you to defeat it, with the right treatment.

