

CHECKING IN WITH...

Saineh Barclay

By age 25, Saineh Barclay had already overcome more adversity than most people face in a lifetime. A cancer survivor, she battled leukemia for nine months before she received a bone marrow transplant. A full match could not be found, but doctors were able to find a half match in her aunt. Five years after the transplant, she was doing well. Enrolled in nursing school with an active social life, she was returning from a vacation when things took a turn. Because of her bone marrow transplant years earlier, Saineh was on a regimen of medication that suppressed her immune system. While on the flight home, she contracted H. influenza, a bacterium that can result in severe infection. Things quickly went from bad to worse.

She was rushed to the ER upon landing, but by the time she arrived, she had already gone into septic shock. When she awoke, she was told that due to the illness and the medications used during the transplant, which restricted blood flow to certain areas of the body, it was possible both legs would need to be amputated to save her life. Saineh then made the difficult decision to amputate both of her legs below the knee.

She came to Magee in spring of 2009, ready to get back to her life and back in the classroom. Saineh was eager to return to nursing school, and she credits Magee with helping her get there.

"There are certain physical requirements nurses have to meet, such as the ability to stand for several hours, transferring patients, lifting and things like that," she said. "When I got to Magee, I couldn't do any of those things, and couldn't return to classes until I was able to. I took the list of

requirements to my care team, and they helped me reach all the goals I needed to be accepted back into the program."

But Magee did more than get Saineh back into school—her connections at the Hospital gave her the opportunity of a lifetime.

"Thanks to a donation to Magee by the Anapol Schwartz Foundation, I was able to attend an Amputee Coalition Conference in California," she said. "Being an amputee in Philly, I don't get many chances to meet other amputees, let alone amputees my age. At this conference, I didn't have to hide my disability, and I made friends that I still talk to today."

Attending the conference also gave Saineh a newfound confidence.

"I came out with the sense that I could do anything," she said. "I saw amputees doing everything an able-bodied person can do, things I never thought I would be able to do again. I know now that I can do anything I put my mind to."

Since her time at Magee, Saineh has graduated from Widener University with her nursing degree, and is preparing to start a job at Devereux, a nonprofit behavioral health organization that serves people with emotional, developmental and educational disabilities. And with all she has experienced these past few years, she has some words of wisdom to pass on to young people who have undergone an amputation.

"Remember, it's not the end of the world," she said. "Don't let amputation stop you from pursuing your dreams. It's a long road and it takes time, but if you put in the work, eventually you will get where you want to go."

