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Illness took brother too soon



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It is so sad to watch the disease take away someone's life, especially when they are so young

— BRIAN ELLIS, MLC, WHOSE BROTHER GARRY SUFFERED FROM MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY AND DIED AGED 16

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BROTHERS can be difficult but some are more difficult than others.

MLC Brian Ellis grew up with a brother, Garry, who had muscular dystrophy.

Having to carry Garry to classes and look after him was just part of the everyday routine.

Muscular dystrophy affects mainly young boys and is the result of a gene abnormality on the X chromosome.

It causes muscles to degenerate and the condition worsens with age.

Most boys affected by the disease will be wheelchair bound by their early teens.

Garry was 16 when he died.

March is muscular dystrophy awareness month and Mr Ellis hopes it will raise awareness of muscular dystrophy in the community.

“In the early days we knew there was something wrong but didn't know what it was,” he said.

“Garry was in a wheelchair by the age of 12 and had constant trips to Perth for medical appointments.”

Mr Ellis admits it was a strain on family life.

“I admire my mother, who had to give him more attention than the rest of us kids,” he said.

“Not that we minded. It was just what had to happen.

“My brother had a great attitude, even though he had to spend a lot of time away from the family.”

Mr Ellis said it was a very hard disease to watch someone go through.

“It takes over your life,” he said.

“Someone has to care for them and it is not that you complain about it, but it does put strain on the family.

“It is so sad to watch the disease take away someone's life, especially when they are so young.”

Mr Ellis said muscular dystrophy was a disease many people were unaware of.

“It is not widely understood in the community, which is why muscular dystrophy awareness month is so important,” he said.

The State Government recently announced it would invest \$647,000 over three years to undertake a clinical trial for muscular dystrophy patients.

Mr Ellis said the trial had the potential to improve the quality of life for muscular dystrophy sufferers.

“Hopefully this research will have a terrific positive affect on muscular dystrophy in the future,” he said.

Mr Ellis encouraged any muscular dystrophy sufferers in Geraldton to contact his office in Geraldton.

“I am happy to meet with families and help them in any way we can,” he said.