



★ Less than one in 1 million children are diagnosed with restrictive cardiomyopathy. For sisters Shayde (left) and Emily Smith to have it is extremely rare.



Dr. Kristine Guleserian is assistant professor of cardiothoracic surgery at UT Southwestern Medical Center.



On occasion, families come to us searching for a miracle. Rarely do they come looking for two.

This week, Emily's mom is signing her up for soccer. Emily's older sister, Shayde, is planning to be a cheerleader someday soon.

Normal lives of two little girls, right? Anything but. Emily, 7, just had a heart transplant this past January. Shayde, 9, is still waiting for hers.

UT Southwestern surgeons at Children's Medical Center Dallas have performed more than their share of heart transplants, 123 in all. But this case was a first.



(From left) Shayde, "Dr. G," and the girls' mom, Natalie, all wore matching heart pendants the day of Emily's transplant.

in 1 million children. That two sisters would have exactly the same heart condition is almost unheard of. But like everything else the bubbly Smith sisters have in common—such as their blonde hair, their love of art, and their beagle puppy, Charlie—they share this fatal disease.

Despite Emily's successful surgery, Natalie Van Noy, the girls' mother, remains attached to her phone, bags packed, waiting for the call that doctors

have found a donor match for Shayde. But Natalie feels a quiet confidence about returning to Children's the second time.

"From the surgeons to the nurses to the counselors to the ladies who answer the phones, everyone at Children's has taken my two girls and treated them like their own," Natalie says.

Almost instantly after Emily received her new heart, her lips turned pink, her cheeks became rosy, and her spirits improved. She often eats two whole sandwiches at lunch now to feed her newfound energy.

Shayde knows firsthand the struggle that lies ahead of her. But remarkably, she says she isn't scared. She has bonded with the Children's staff and has seen Emily's dramatic improvement. Ask her to describe her younger sister in one word, and Shayde simply says, "Healthy."

"I'm pretty excited for my little sister. I wanted her to get the heart transplant before mine because she's worse than me. Her getting better makes me feel better."
—Shayde Smith, age 9

Restrictive cardiomyopathy, a condition that causes a stiffening of the heart, strikes less than one