

Join the Fight for a Miracle

One of the most heart-wrenching reports a parent could ever receive is that their child is seriously ill. In Poland, this may not be where the bad news ends. Very often the parents of sick children are informed that the medicine or treatment which could save their child's life is not supported by the National Health Fund (Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia). This is when the real fight for a miracle begins because the costs of life-saving foreign treatments and medications are so high that they are out of the reach of the parents and the healthcare community. The available time to raise funds is typically a major challenge as well. This is a plea for a miracle and a plea for help.

This is the case for Wiktor, aged 12, and his parents Beata and Przemyslaw, who began their fight for a miracle late last year. Wiktor had become apathetic and tired, suffered from headaches, had begun vomiting, and then developed issues with his eyes and vision. His parents looked for help from specialists, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic his diagnosis was unfortunately delayed. Eventually Wiktor's ophthalmologist gave him a series of tests that indicated a cancerous brain tumor. Wiktor was lucky because he lives in Szczecin, where the neurosurgical resources are world-class, and he soon found himself under the treatment of Professor Leszek Sagan, MD who is one of Poland's top specialists. Unfortunately, Wiktor's treatment hit a wall because his tumor was deemed inoperable. However, part of the tumor was removed, and it was sent for pathological studies.

The diagnosis was devastating, *pineoblastoma*, a very rare and aggressive cancer comprising less than 1% of brain cancers found in children.

Wiktor is currently heading into his sixth round of chemotherapy. Surrounded by his loving parents and the attentive team that administers his treatments, he is bravely enduring the pain, the fatigue, the nausea, and the fear of what is yet to come. His main worry though is whether his hospital room gets enough large chairs for parents from the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (Wielka Orkiestra Swiatecznej Pomocy) so his Mom would always have a place to get a good night's sleep.

Before his illness Wiktor was very active. His love for sports started when he was just 4 years old. He joined the local Szczecin Berserkers club and began to train in jiu jitsu. It was there that he learned that you don't always win but you must systematically and continuously keep working towards the goals that you set for yourself. It was also there that Wiktor also learned discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, and accountability. He also loved the water and soon developed an interest in windsurfing and sailing. Every year after the sailing season ended Wiktor would plan the family ski trip. He loves skiing in the Tatra mountains.

The most important people in Wiktor's life are his parents and his brother. His diagnosis caused Wiktor to mature very quickly and see the world quite differently than his peers. It is easy to understand after hearing his most recent words to his mother, *"Mom I am scared that I will die, but I could live if we got help. I don't know if life will ever be normal again, if I will have another Christmas, or if my little brother will remember me when he grows up. I love him very much and I would like to show him our beautiful world. I'd like to teach him how to ride a bike, to ski, to sail, to swim, to windsurf, to play the piano or the guitar...whatever he would like."*

Wiktor's current treatments are not achieving the desired results, but thanks to the foundation *Zobacz Mnie (Eng. See Me)* (<https://zobaczmnie.org/>) the family was able to get in contact with Children's Hospital in St. Louis in the United States. Their suggested immunological treatment for Wiktor would give him an 85% chance of overcoming his cancer. This proven treatment would cost over 9 million złoty (about 2.2 million USD). In order for the treatment to bring about the desired outcome Wiktor would need to begin this therapy by the end of May. Neither the foundation nor the hospital is able to assist with payment for his treatment. This is where we need your help...and we need that help immediately.

The main tool in the family's fundraising arsenal has been an internet foundation, *siepomaga.pl (Eng. We Help)* (<https://www.siepomaga.pl/en/wiktor-lewicki>). This is one of the charitable websites in Poland where many turn in their darkest times with hope for their future, their health, and sometimes even their very lives. All cases on this site have been verified in a three-step process and the site's community is over 6 million people strong. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people in need who often need large sums of money. *Siepomaga.pl* works very well and enjoys the trust of the public; however, its assistance is not sufficient. This is why families are often forced to look for help from foreign donors. Thanks to online communities Wiktor's case has roused the interest of Polonia in Australia and the United States. Leaders of Polonia in Texas contacted Wiktor's parents and put them in touch with the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Houston and Chicago, as well as the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in St. Louis. They have also offered help in negotiating the costs of treatment with the hospital. Polonia in Chicago shared a contact with the *Dar Serca foundation (Eng. A Gift from the Heart)*, <https://darserca.org/en>, which offers help to families coming to the United States for medical treatment. Although all of this help is appreciated, the biggest hurdle for Wiktor's family is obtaining the necessary funds. As a result, Polonia in Australia and the United States are reaching out to many institutions, companies, and private individuals which could help raise the required funds.

There are only 7 days left until the end of Wiktor's fundraising drive. Everyone involved in the effort has hope that we can meet the goal. Wiktor needs a million people with good hearts, to donate \$2.00 USD—or 7000 people to each contribute \$275.00 USD. **At this time, 92 855 people contributed an excess of 42% of the amount needed to realize the goal of this fundraiser!** There are several ways to help Wiktor in the battle for his life. Donations can be

made through <https://www.siepomaga.pl/en/wiktor-lewicki> or directly into the following account:

Receiver

Fundacja Siepomaga
Pl. Wladyslawa Andersa 3
61-894 Poznan

Bank Account Number
81 2490 1028 3587 1000 0012 7332
IBAN: PL81249010283587100000127332
BIC/SWIFT Code: ALBPPLPW
Transfer Title
Darowizna Wiktor Lewicki

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your help!

Please spread this story about Wiktor's battle by sharing it with your friends, family, church, community, and social media. Collecting this sum is possible but we all need to pitch in to help. Wiktor has 7 days left to raise the funds so he can get the treatments and live the life that he so cherishes.

Joanna Kotlińska, Sydney, Australia

Beata Mielnik-Lewicka, Szczecin, Poland

Krzysztof (Christopher) J. Gajda, MBA, CPA, Texas, USA