

Dear Family/Friends,

As you may or may not know, two of my brothers – Jim and Tom Smith - have **VHL (Von Hippel-Lindau)**. **VHL** is a genetic condition involving the abnormal growth of blood vessels in various parts of the body which are particularly rich in blood vessels. It is caused by a flaw in one gene, the VHL gene, on the short arm of chromosome 3, which regulates cell growth.

Over all, about **one person in 32,000** in the world has VHL. About 20% are new mutations, and 80% are children of parents who themselves had VHL. Most people with VHL will begin having clinically significant issues in their teens or twenties. About 10% of children can be seen to have eye or adrenal problems before age 10.

Jim and Tom are a part of that 80% - they unfortunately inherited the VHL gene from our father and grandfather. Both have had surgeries due to the disease, but Tom's has progressed at a faster pace during the past few years. He had spinal surgery July 2009, brain surgery in November 2009 and kidney surgery in January 2010, all to remove cysts/tumors caused by VHL (if the cysts/tumors are not removed before they reach a certain size, they tend to turn into malignancies). My brother Peter & I both went through genetic testing and we do not carry the gene.

The VHL Family Alliance is the sole advocacy group for patients with VHL. I recently attended their Annual Patient and Caregiver Meeting - I agreed to go in order to support my two brothers. The meeting was an incredible opportunity to learn about monitoring for growth and treating VHL tumors.

The VHL Family Alliance is also involved in research for treating and ultimately curing this disease. I hope that you will join me in supporting this important effort. My personal goal is to raise \$25,000. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to help me meet this goal. Enclosed is an envelope you may utilize for donations to the **VHL Family Alliance** (Tax ID: 04-3180414). Or you may make an online donation by going to the VHL website: <http://vhl.org/helpnow/>.

Any donation you can make, no matter the size, will help fund the research needed to find a cure for Jim and Tom as well as others living with VHL. If you can help in any way, it would be greatly appreciated. All donations are tax deductible. **Every dollar we can raise for VHL research is so important!**

NO DONATION IS TOO SMALL! EVERY RESEARCH DOLLAR COUNTS IN THE FIGHT!!!

On behalf of myself and my family, thanks so much for helping in the fight against this disease!

Best regards,

*The VHL gene controls the major feeding pipeline of every tumor.
Curing VHL is one step closer to curing other forms of cancer!*