



## ***In search of peace***

*"One way for one to survive is to engage in work, a lot of work. Then one forgets"*

*My story began two years before I was diagnosed. I am a single mother and at that time wanted to get pregnant again. In 2009, I tried to make a new family for myself and my child; I was in a relationship with a man who contributed a lot towards the onset of my disease. After dreadful jealousy, deprivation and*

fight for the new family, **the doctors diagnosed me with chronic lymphocytic leukemia**. And instead of making plans for a new beginning, the big battle for my survival started. I still remember my doctor's words that this condition is untreatable but is affected by a patient's lifestyle; so I distanced myself from all surrounding irritants, learned **how to suppress my extreme emotions and adopted a healthy diet**.

In the spring of 2011 I left Bulgaria; I did not want my family watching me "mutate". Those were quiet and peaceful days in exile, far away from relatives and problems, but that was only a temporary solution. I came back in the winter of 2012, when my first serious relapse occurred, and it was then I first realized the seriousness of my condition. During the month I stayed in hospital, I met people with much more severe diseases than mine and realized **how important it was to give courage** to such people and how important it was to keep your morale high. I promised to myself that if I got better, I would travel abroad again, and so I did, twice.

**One way for one to survive is to engage in work, a lot of work.** Then one forgets. Until autumn of 2013 this was my guiding light. Unfortunately, since then I have been and still am in hospital, which prevents me from working and traveling, but I still manage to find ways to be active and still manage to find dreams to pursue. Years go by for me, with constant disputes with doctors as to whether I should start a new treatment. I make short journeys around Bulgaria and Greece, and have plans to requalify as a social worker in health care facilities. I keep working for blood donor campaigns and focus my efforts on helping people with similar conditions. I keep dreaming, too! **For me, CLL is not a disease; for me, CLL is a way of life!**

PHCZ/IMB/0717/0001