

Dear []

Hello again. I promised to send you a bit more information about my sponsored bike ride
..... so here it is.

I mentioned in my last email that Michael has had Crohn's disease since he was 12. Usually the symptoms appear between the ages of 15 and 40. Michael was just that bit more unlucky I suppose in that he got a three year head start on the usual age to suffer from Crohn's. I don't think you really want to know what the symptoms are (!) so let's look at the treatment. At its mildest the symptoms can be treated simply with diet – hold that thought as it's very relevant to what the money has been raised for so far. Treatments can then include steroids but at some point it is often necessary to remove the inflamed section of the gut. In Michael's case, he had successive sections removed over a number of years. He would have really benefitted from having a zip put in early doors – it would have saved one heck of a lot of stitches and recovery! As I said in my last email, he eventually “ran out” of bits to remove and had a whole new gut transplanted!

But just back-tracking for a moment, in the early stages the treatment can be limited to merely dietary change. This is pretty important because you don't really want to put kids on steroids if you can help it. The money Michael and his rides have raised over the first two years of the ride are funding a research programme that, ultimately, helps tell the doctors what dietary changes work best. Apparently, people who have Crohn's disease have a thick fatty layer around their gut that you and I don't have. The current research programme is examining what causes this additional fatty tissue. The doctors are about 2/3 of the way through this programme and have discovered that certain fats in the diet exacerbate this fatty tissue. Now the guys tell me that they are still some way off being able to actually change the constituents in a sufferers diet to improve matters but the latest results from the research have shown that some food compounds cause less fatty build up than others and also that some ways of breaking the foods down cause less fatty build up than others. Cool

don't you think? The money already raised has been put to such good use that it will lead to changes in treatment to help sufferers. I think that's pretty impressive.

It would be great if you could help with this initial research. If you want to help, please sponsor me using the link below (or let me know if you would rather sign a hard copy sponsor form). Did I mention that all the money raised goes to the research programmes? That's right none of the money I raise goes to pay for the ride. That's all covered by our sponsors, WPP, Squire Sanders and Standard Bank. How neat is that?

So what, you may ask, is my "hardship" in this challenge. Try [3, 4, 5, 6] hours on 4" of hard leather bicycle seat [three/four] days in a row. I accept the countryside is beautiful to look at but the seat is not exactly "premium economy"! At the moment I am cycling [•] miles per week to try and get used to the discomfort before the ride. [And, you may have noticed that it has not been the driest drought on record!]

If you can support that would be great. Bye for now – another training ride beckons!