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Critical Illness Insurance from a First Hand Perspective

As a financial planner I have always had an appreciation of the importance of critical illness insurance. I know the odds of getting a critical illness and realize the risks. This practical appreciation of the odds is not the same as the experience of actually dealing with a critical illness.

In September of 2005 my wife, Sandra and I were getting ready for a trip to the Grand Canyon when Sandra said she wasn't feeling well and wanted to get a checkup before we left. One week later she was in surgery. She had been diagnosed with cancer. It is a life altering experience to discover you or a loved one is seriously ill. In the last seven months we have been through eight rounds of chemotherapy, many days in hospital and doctors appointments, lost numerous days from work, and had to change many plans we had made.

We were very fortunate to get Sandra in to see a leading specialist. Most Canadians wait months to see someone like this we were told, if they get in at all. Sandra was able to get involved in a clinical trial through her doctor. Living in Canada you would think that everything is covered under a government or private health plan. Trust me when I say it is not. So far we have incurred about \$5000 of medical expenses which were not covered by the government or our benefit plan. We also had to make some minor changes at home which cost money.

As I am self employed, I estimate that I lost \$20,000 to \$30,000 in income due to not working as much or working less efficiently due to stress. Sandra was fortunate to have a job with sick days so she didn't lose any income. Sandra was not able to claim against her work disability insurance since she was not off

work continuously.

We explored the possibility of getting treatment in the U.S. A one day trip to Buffalo cost us \$900 just for a doctor's interview and blood tests. We were told that treatment in Buffalo would cost \$60,000 to \$100,000 U.S.

As it turned out we were able to get the extra treatment in Canada but if we had to go to Buffalo we would have. We had critical illness insurance, of course, which would have paid for most of the Buffalo costs but if we didn't have it we still would have paid. My wife's life was at stake. I would pay anything to make her better.

The real value of the critical illness insurance became apparent very quickly. After receiving the lump sum cheque from the insurance company, any expense that arose, anything we wanted to do or buy to reduce stress, any lost income was immediately taken care of by writing a cheque.

Sandra currently has no evidence of disease. She will be monitored for years to come. I am thankful that Sandra had excellent medical care and a wonderful support network of family and friends. I am also glad we had appropriate insurance in place to take care of any extra expenses.

Cost of things paid for with our Critical Illness Insurance:

Medical: \$5,000
Income Loss: \$25,000
Home Modifications: \$1,000
Out of country medical: \$900
Stress Reduction: Priceless

