Gastroenterology

At age 10, Analise was struck by the first symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) while away at summer camp. She would have to go to the bathroom more than a dozen times per day, suffered from abdominal pain and bloody diarrhea, and had stunted growth. The condition was especially frustrating for Analise, who had aspirations to become a professional actor, singer and dancer, and had just signed on with a professional manager.

Analise’s parents took her to a local physician, who diagnosed her with a type of IBD called ulcerative colitis. But when she didn’t improve significantly after a year of treatment, they sought a second opinion and met with Dr. Robbyn Sockolow, professor of clinical pediatrics at Weill Cornell Medicine and chief of the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition. Dr. Sockolow, an expert in treating IBD and other gastrointestinal disorders in children, suspected that Analise had been misdiagnosed, since her stunted growth didn’t jibe with ulcerative colitis (UC).

After additional testing, Dr. Sockolow diagnosed the young patient with Crohn’s disease, a different type of IBD. In both diseases, the mucosa—the lining of the gastrointestinal tract—becomes inflamed. But there are important differences between the two. While UC is limited to the colon and generally involves more superficial inflammation, Crohn’s can affect the entire digestive tract and have more severe consequences for overall health. Once Dr. Sockolow identified Crohn’s as the culprit, she was able to develop a successful treatment plan for Analise which included innovative infusion therapy and a tailored diet. In less than a year, all of Scarpaci’s symptoms decreased, and by the time she made her Broadway debut in A Christmas Story, she was in remission. The following year she was cast in the Broadway hit Matilda.

Now a musical theater major at Pace, Analise is active in the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation, which named her the pediatric honoree of its Staten Island benefit walk last summer. While there is no cure for Crohn’s – Analise continues to see Dr. Sockolow for infusion therapy and keeps to her diet regimen – she is able to thrive, and fully pursue her personal and professional goals.
Successful treatment for Crohn’s Disease let a young New Yorker pursue her Broadway dreams

- Analise’s Story