

The Spurrell Family Part 7: John

John is Alan's 16 year old second cousin who lives with his family in the community of Coastal Point, Labrador. He is a Grade 10 student at Coastal Point Consolidated School, enjoys school and does well in his studies. He is an athlete and competes in the annual Arctic Winter Games in the Kneel Jump and One Foot High Kick categories.

Not unlike many families in Coastal Point, John and his family live in substandard housing. The community water purification unit is in constant need of repair and the community is frequently under "boil order" requirements. Their home is small, but they have fashioned three small bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen area. They heat their home with a combination of heating oil and wood.

John is the oldest child. He has two brothers and two sisters ranging in age from 15 to 7 years old. His father and mother work at the community centre and in seasonal employment. John's Grandmother also lives with them in their home. They are a close-knit family with strong community ties. Extended family live in neighbouring homes.

Late one very cold evening in January while everyone was asleep, the stove in the living area leaked oil and caught fire. The home was quickly engulfed in flames. Panic ensued as everyone scrambled to escape the fire. During the commotion the youngest child hid under the bed and was consumed by the flames. John had to escape the flames by crawling out a window. His night clothes caught fire and he was severely burned. He rolled in the snow outside to extinguish the flames, but sustained considerable burns and cuts.

Despite being the middle of the night, the community quickly came to life to help the family. The house was a complete loss. Family members were taken in by neighbouring families. John was taken to the Community Clinic and was attended to by the Nurse Practitioner and a visiting Family Medicine Resident. Upon examination they find the following:

- They estimate John has received 2nd degree burns to 30% of his body including his arms, chest, abdomen and back, and 1st degree burns covering 20% of his body, primarily his legs. Part of his clothing was nylon and some of the fabric has fused into his burned tissue
- There is a burn encompassing his entire left arm
- He has sustained burns to his groin area
- There is evidence of smoke inhalation and feels he can't catch his breath
- He is in considerable pain
- He is very upset that his little sister died in the fire
- Pre-existing medical conditions; persistent cough, asthma

Several members of this family have shown up at the clinic and want to be present with him during his assessment and treatment.