

After being diagnosed, I wanted to take this opportunity to write about my experience and hopefully help others in return.

The last half year during my illness I felt like not dragging myself to my workstation --- what was the point, I would fall asleep anyways and if I managed to keep myself awake, my energy and concentration would go into just that --- keeping myself awake. The days dragged by in a fog of tiredness, back pain, muscle twitches, muscle cramps, severe constipation, pain and swelling in joints and periods of numbness in the left side of my face and right arm. Due to these attacks of numbness, where also my left pupil became larger than the other in dim light, I was in hospital where a CT scan was taken of my brain to secure that there were no arterial bleeding in the brain that could have caused these sensations and the slow reaction of my left pupil. Later on a MRI was taken of my brain and the veins to search for the reason to these symptoms were nothing was found. Lots of different neurological test were done during the last two years before my diagnosis. I have seen several neurologist, rheumatologists, traumatologists, internal medicine doctors. My body have been scanned with CT, X---rays, MRI of the brain several times with and without contrast, the neck, the upper back, the lower back and sacroiliac joints, and my hands, not to mention the different kinds of visual tests and the needle test with small electric shocks into the muscles that were done to rule out neurological diseases. My body was not only scanned from outside --- a gastroscopy and a colonoscopy was done and nothing was found as usual. Imagine my frustration after each test when the doctor would happily announce that all was looking good, nothing was found, except I was feeling like hell. The doctors started to doubt me, no wonder with all expensive tests and nothing was found. One internal medicine doctor told me to book an appointment to a psychologist, but I insisted to see a neurologist at that same hospital. During the appointment with the neurologist I was told again to book an appointment to a psychologist. If you are not depressed you sure would be from far less.

The last year before my diagnosis the symptoms were extremely tiring. I had a pressure, like something was stuck, in my throat and weird "thuncks" from my heart --- it felt like the heart had a hard time bumping. The muscle twitches were keeping me up --- I had troubles falling asleep since there was a twitch each second in any muscle and when I finally fell asleep I would wake up to a muscle

cramp. I could easily have 30---40 cramps a day and I constantly ate painkillers and muscle relaxants for my back pain and headache. My husband searched through the internet and told me to go and see this doctor who treats people for myofascial pain to at least get some relieve for my backache. I was suspicious. I had seen lots of doctors who only had prescribed me different kinds of NSAIDs, muscle relaxants and I had also tried physiotherapy without much noticing any effect and I had been told to reserve appointment to psychologists, but I was suffering, so I went.

During my first appointment Dr. Raaste interviewed me about my symptoms, which had at that time lasted for 6 years, but became more severe during the last two years. He found the sore spots in my lower back and injected anesthetic deep into the sore parts of my muscles and tendons massaging the muscle at the injection site. After the treatment it felt good, but I still had a lot of pain. It would not help with only one treatment --- I would have another a week from that. Dr Raaste took my portfolio of tests home with him to look thru them. I was very surprised, but glad of cause, that finally a doctor was listening to me and was genuinely interested in finding out what was going on with me. I did not have much hope though. None had figured it out so far after 6 years of tests and doctors' appointments after all. Then came my second appointment. I had the same treatment --- injections and a massage of the muscles after which we discussed about what Dr. Raaste had found out from my files. He had written down on a piece of paper my Thyroid results from blood work during several years and what could be seen was that my TSH level had been gradually rising, so he ordered a few more thyroid test that no doctor so far had ever ordered plus a blood work to check for a parasite that live in contaminated water since I had been in middle east. Until next appointment I was ordered to take my basal temperature to follow up on what my body temperature was in the morning.

It was time for my third appointment and I had high hopes --- not in vain this time! My thyroid was not working as it should --- my body temperature was low and I was to start taking thyroid hormone. Since the diagnosis and the medication all my symptoms have vanished. I am as energetic as I used to be, many years ago. Not irritated and tired any longer. No more back--- or muscle pain, no muscle twitches nor cramps. I do have a pressure in my throat that starts with a harsh voice --- when I start to feel it, it has gone too many hours since my last pill and I need a new one.

The diagnosis, treatment and follow up on hypo thyroiditis are not easy. I have learned that the treatment also varies a lot (after my diagnosis two other members in my family have been diagnosed and medicated) depending on the bloodwork and what is causing the low function of the thyroid gland. Some have low functionality due imbalance of cortisol, some have an autoimmune disease and some have a conversion problem from T4 to T3 and some do not produce enough T4 etc., why it is important that the correct bloodwork is taken. In my case, during all 6 years before the diagnosis, only bloodwork of my T4 and TSH levels were taken. Unfortunately this seems to be the standard bloodwork that is taken by healthcare professionals, why my low T3 levels and conversion problem was missed. If the only bloodwork that is taken are these two, then the autoimmune thyroid disease is also missed, since there are specific blood tests for autoimmune thyroid disorders too.

When on the treatment one has to keep track on how one feels and follow up with your doctor since after the starting dosage is to be increased gradually and also to see if the treatment is working, if it should be increased, or if the medication is to be switched into another.

I am so happy I finally got the answer to my health issues. I got my life back after so many years of constant pain and tiredness. Already after a few days of the treatment I could feel a Huge difference. Within a month of medication the puffiness, swelling in my face disappeared. Now after 5 months of treatment I am able to run again without shortness of breath, back pain from inhaling. I have lost a few kilos without making any changes in my diet, I sleep well at night and I am energetic to take on new challenges again. I hope my story helps others so that you do not have to endure for 6 years as I did.

Kind regards, Jeanette