

Article 17 – Conclusion: Hope, Guidance and Patience

Once again we are pushed to the brink of our limits. Here comes another complex disorder posting severe devastating conditions whose causes remain unknown. Despite decent effort from several health care professionals, treatment remains relatively vague¹. What makes it even harder is the diagnosis – it is almost impossible to determine it through self-examination while even help from experts is uncertain as its symptoms are also common to many illnesses. Studies revealed that in the United States, less than 20% out of the estimated four million with CFS have been diagnosed².

HOPE DESPITE THE DAMAGING NATURE OF CFS

Obviously, we are in the odds again – but what more can we do? Should we despair over our helplessness or should we continue to work harder? We can always hope for the better. Hope is what keeps us moving forward. Continues studies and researches will bring up the most accurate test for diagnosis of CFS and provide the most effective treatment.

Hope is perhaps the most beautiful thing in this world. It all starts here and as long as the Pandora's Box remains unopened, it will lead to wonderful opportunities. As Dr. Alan Gurwitt, one of the case researchers and clinicians, highly noted, 'progress in the understanding of CFS/ME, its nature and management, has increased wonderfully over the past years as more and more countries, researchers, and clinicians have become involved. There is much reason for hope.'³

It all starts here. Nowadays, a lot of advancements have been made in this world. In fact, it is never ending. Humans have an insatiable hunger of unraveling mysteries and signifying discoveries. They seek out infinite answers from their infinite questions. However, there is still a lot of things that remain hidden beyond our clear understanding – just like the case of CFS.

Looking back, where does everything really start? Before Neil Armstrong landed into the moon, he certainly struggled first learning to balance his bike. So many has suffered helplessly from headaches before Over-the-Counter medications were put into used.

Since CFS was first defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1994 as an unexplained, persistent, or relapsing fatigue of 6 months' duration that cannot be explained by other medical conditions³, several researches that followed showed significant improvements.

There is no need for anxiety. Everything will fall into place as long as hope and courage will be in the driver's seat. Ever heard of the saying scrubbing the floors before asking to manage the building⁴?

The mystery in the middle – What is really there to hope for? CFS posts four major challenges. First, it is a disorder. Second is its unfamiliarity to many. Although unfamiliar, it doesn't follow that it is uncommon as well. Third, perhaps the greatest challenge it has, it is very hard to

diagnose. Lastly, there is no official therapy, medicines or any form of treatment that are in used today by health care professionals.

The good news is it's not as bad as we think. Although not yet the best possible ways to address these challenges, researchers have gotten considerable progresses that would at least lessen the harmful effects of CFS to its host person. There is no standard treatment but the medical community has come up with several options and alternative strategies depending on a patient's CFS status, from mild to severe. For the challenge in Diagnosis, different studies are numerous and simultaneously on the go to provide better case definitions and encourage doctors from all around the world to take the overall challenge that CFS posts. Raising awareness may be hard at this point⁵ but as long as there are organizations, websites, and companies who continue to raise their advocate in spreading the concern, worldwide awareness on CFS may be achieved.

It all ends there. Where does every consistent and sincere hard work end? Today, it is apparent that there is still a lot of light to be shed out of the darkness that CFS gives but all that's to be done is to continue and before we even know it - it is already the sun facing us.

IMPORTANCE OF ASKING A DOCTOR BEFORE TAKING MATTERS INTO ONE'S OWN HANDS

Every patient needs the courage to stand up and take the challenges that his/her deficiency is posting to him/her. However, he also needs considerable help from a healthcare professional. He has to be directed as to what is he standing up against and take the proper confrontation on its challenges. Self-examination is one of the best things a patient can do for him-/herself but it shouldn't end there. It is very substandard and usually ineffective to examine oneself without consultation from an attending doctor, and to then incorporate occurring symptoms and self-acclaimed results to notions. It's just like playing darts with blindfold; the target can't really be seen, what's known is its just there. Nothing beats proper diagnosis from professionals. Using medically based approaches like different health tests, more accurate findings and result will be attained. From there, the patient is more assured to get better for the proper medication will observe.

It is better safe than sorry. As long as health is at stake, never take things for granted. A mild fever could already be a symptom of malaria, while a simple strain can lead to bone cancer. Alternative and substandard medication can lessen or perhaps stop an ailment but not in the long run. What's even worse is, as we keep relying on these temporary aids, eventually it will come to a point where we can no longer be 'truly' treated. It is therefore highly recommended by medical practitioners for patients to have their deepest concerns on their health by getting medications prescribed by a reliable health expert as early as possible. Investment in health is perhaps the best investment of all. Health is wealth after all.

Don't get darker in the dark. CFS still posts a lot of mysteries to the medical world so as damaging as it is already, its unpredictability makes it worst. As stated by a CFS physician, 'CFS

patients have great variability in their reactions to treatments. Trial and error is necessary in finding treatments and dosages that help.* It can be concluded then that even experts have yet to arrive to a 'true' treatment. Therefore, in the case of CFS, the patients will have to rely much more to the experts as the case still remains vague. It's quite simple; don't use a hammer to a rock which even a tractor cannot break.

Taking matters into our own hands comes into play after we have been directed by our doctor. Medication doesn't end in our time with the doctor, it continues in our lifetime.

IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE AND CONFIDENCE WHEN APPROACHING CFS

The way that usually works for patients with any type of disability is having both optimism and consistency. Before one can do something, he first has to believe that he can do it. Moreover, he has to keep up this belief until the very end. These, together with the wonders of science, will ensure the bright side of things for the patients.

CFS, as repeatedly mentioned, posts a serious problem due to its vagueness that experts have yet to reveal. Without a clearer understanding of the case, it is highly regarded that a patient diagnosed with it should be more insistent. The bigger the problem is the stronger the belief should be.

When will I get better? In a weird way, knowing that one has CFS is something to be thanked for. A patient diagnosed with CFS has already gotten past half of the job because diagnosis of the case remains very hard even with professionals. S/he can therefore already receive the right therapy and medication s/he needs. However, the question on how long it takes to outlast CFS remains uncertain. CFS vary in degree and although there are many cases in which improvement of patients with CFS were reported, no official therapy or any form of treatment has been released by medical experts. All that has to be done is to bear with oneself and trust that improvement on one's condition will be attained.

Coping. Several self-care strategies have been provided out there for people with CFS. Physically, one has to have an even healthier lifestyle. S/he has to double his/her effort in paying attention and providing action on his/her health.* To do this, the emotional area of the patient should also be ready. S/he should acknowledge the toughness of having CFS. Understanding it will give him/her the realization of the simple logic that a big challenge needs more effort. So instead of downing him-/herself, s/he would push more effort. Lastly, the therapy and medication that would put up by the doctor should be properly maintained.