

My MS Journey...

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It all started close to 20 years ago...

I went to London to manage a career fare for my company. The last day was planned for sightseeing. I saw most of London in that day, using the amazing tube system for transport. We were almost at the end of the day and the London eye was the last item on our agenda. My left leg started aching, cramping, and got so unbearable that I couldn't walk. I saw the London eye from a distance but couldn't make it to get close enough to take the ride.

I did not take this seriously and life continued. In June 2014, I was cooking a Turkey for the family Eid lunch. My leg started getting numb and I limped for about a week, dragging my left leg until I recouped. I did

not take this seriously either.

In December 2014, I experienced my first real attack. My leg went completely numb and maintaining balance become impossible. As I sat down to pray, I could not decipher the words in front of me and so I rushed to hospital.

Casualties wanted to send me home as, face value, I looked fine but, I refused. I was dripped and spent the next 3 weeks in hospital. The neurologist suspected that it was MS but had not yet confirmed the diagnosis. I went home and life continued.

6 months later my left cheek went numb and I lost vision in my left eye. I ended up back in hospital and the diagnosis was confirmed. We got a second opinion, and again, it was confirmed.

I recall sitting in my hospital bed, tears streaming down my cheeks uncontrollably. For the first time in my life, I was terrified. I did not want to be in a wheelchair then or even in the near future.

Being the breadwinner in my marriage, I needed to work. To do this, I needed both mental and physical health. I had left my permanent job at 2 years prior to my diagnosis in order to invest in a business for my husband. This business did not work. I continued to fight, push, and work. I closed contracts and managed to make most payments and see to the household. I was not on medical aid as I could not afford it any longer. My medication costed a whopping R11000 per month. I lost my car, then the next car, and finally, I lost my dream home.

I had 2 teenage girls and fell pregnant with a boy a year after the diagnosis. I called my ex-boss and burst out into tears, begging her for a job. She gave me a contract immediately, even though I knew that budgets were tight due to poor performance. The medical aid waiting period was over so we could use the salary for the household expenses and to prepare for the arrival of my baby. Since losing our home, we stayed in a few places and finally settled down in a beautiful penthouse apartment. My girls' dreams realised as they lost their own rooms when we lost our home.

My baby was a year old and I still continued to see to the family. My ex colleagues and ex-boss kept a look out for me for work. Every time a contract came close to the end, I got an MS attack. This was largely due to the stress and worry for my family.

In hospital I am treated with a steroids drip over 5 days. 3 days bed rest is thereafter required to recover. I am on Betaferon injections when out of hospital. Thank you to the All Mighty, my system deals with the meds quite well. I believe that belief makes everything possible - even the meds that you decide to use. There were small challenges like infection from injecting, however, that is minute compared to the limited attacks. My meds come with a professional nurse who is at my every beck and call. Sister Lilly is highly positive and acts or ensures I act as soon as I think I am having an attack. She informed me that the cramps in London 20 years ago could have possibly been when it all started for me. My neurologist, Prof Modi, is the other pillar of strength for me, always on call. And MS patients can call...

With my teenage daughter's help and encouragement, I left my husband. I was the type of person who kept all my challenges private. I had not let anyone outside of my home in. Walking out of my marriage gave me an opportunity to look for and find my own peace. And I did. With no regrets.

In my religion we believe that the prayers of a sick person are accepted. We also believe that every drop of blood lost washes away sins as quickly as beads fall off a broken necklace. I look forward to seeing a that drop of blood as I inject myself 3 times a week. I have seen these blessings first-hand. I accomplished so much more than I could have or tried to in the past. The blessings that I received have been amazing and still manage to leave me in awe when I reflect. The pinnacle of being blessed for success is..."MS patient gets a job during lock down". Yes....I got a perm job!!!.

I had to start with the injections the day after I gave birth to my son. My sisters and sister-in-law took medication and were able to feed him breast milk during his first month in an attempt to ensure that he received all the nutrients he needed. He now holds a very special spot in all of their hearts.

My MS journey has been a whirlwind. However, I grew personally every day since the first attack. I learnt to give without expecting anything in return. This, I learnt from the nurses in a government hospital, who used to sit with me late at night, and teach me how to read and write. This, I also learnt from my hospital buddies, whom I had to ask to accompany me to the ladies' room when I had forgotten how to flush a toilet chain. I learnt this from a very close and special friend whose muscle is degenerating and takes injections across her entire body. This, I learnt from friends and family who are here, and have been here for me unconditionally.

Support is critical for MS survivors and must never be taken lightly. My daughters are my bricks, solid and unwavering with the time that they make for me. My entire family, especially my dad, siblings with their spouses, my nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles. Everyone of them supports me relentlessly. I am in a good space now, both mentally and physically.

MS is MS and will always be MS. There is no cure. I pray for strength to get past each attack and come out a stronger person. I pray for others before I pray for myself. I pray for the Best for my kids and my entire family. I pray for the best for all my friends...angels who touch my life. I had a lot, I lost a lot, I gained So much. I am eternally grateful and urge all MS survivors to stay calm and just keep moving forward. This is the best you can do. "It is what it is," one of my CEO's would always say. I have come to realise that Only God makes everything possible. He makes the Impossible Possible. Always have Hope.

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