

Heidi's Story

I am a thirty year plus Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) patient. At the age of 15 years I was disabled and devastated by the pain and limited future of this crippling disease. My joints were inflamed and painful leading to deformity and severe sickness. I lived in a rural area of the mid-west where treatment and diagnosis with specialists was limited. After a few years of 20 Aspirin per day, I degenerated to hand and feet deformities. I tried to continue to go to school, then college hoping for the day when there would be some treatment to eliminate my pain, fatigue, fevers and swelling. I could not continue at college and tried to work as much as I could. I was finally sent to an Arthritis specialist to help me get some relief. In 1998, in horrible pain with multiple joint swelling, overwhelming fatigue, hand, feet and shoulder deformities I was ready for some relief. I was ready to make life style changes, start an Aquatics program and take the medications this specialist prescribed. In 1998 had a total hip replacement, still hoping for a medication to avoid further joint deterioration and pain. Fortunately, in 2000, my rheumatologist (arthritis specialist) prescribed a new type of medication, DMARD category of drugs; Methotrexate. My doctor injected me every week. It helped for a while but did not stop the, painful and systemic disease of RA that can cause internal organ damage. In order to prevent this, my doctor prescribed a newer category of medications, Biologics; Tier 4 ; Enbrel, which he injected twice a week and I was taught to inject myself weekly. It is very painful but I had hopes that it would help arrest the pain and progression of my disease.

Ten years later, Enbrel is keeping me alive and more active with a quality of life I did not have before. Over the last ten years I have met many other patients with RA, other severe forms of Arthritis and even Cancer who must take a specialty tier drug to enhance their life. Without the affordability of these medications we would be bedridden, wheelchair bound, very ill and some would die.

While Medicare does not pay for any of my medications, private insurance does afford me to be on Enbrel. With a co-pay increase I could pay as much as a 33% increase in my monthly prescription...Ouch! An increase in my co-pay for Enbrel is a major barrier for me to afford it. I hate to think of life without Enbrel – it would be cruel! Please don't let anyone jeopardize my quality of life as I now know it by increasing my Enbrel co-payment. The cost is far too great.

I hope all people who take specialty tier drugs will let our insurance companies and our elected officials know we oppose the brutal high cost of co-insurance for these specialty tier medications. People like me depend on their medications to save our lives and continue our hope every day.

Sincerely,
Heidi



Please Tell Us Your Story!

Go to http://advocatesforresponsiblecare.org/Story_Submission.html and share your story with ARxC to stop the unjust practice of increasing co-payments, co-insurance and high deductibles for specialty tier drugs.