



Have you had your thyroid checked lately??

No matter where you are – where you go or whom you talk to – you are sure to find thyroid disease. Just mention thyroid or Thyroid Foundation of Canada in a casual conversation and you are sure to have someone tell you they have a connection with thyroid disease – either themselves or family or friends or co-workers.

All too often we hear about the difficulty thyroid patients have with their condition from taking a long time to be diagnosed to zoning in on the right approach to management or treatment of the condition. Sometimes the stories we hear are very traumatic – why – because of the family doctor not having the knowledge or the awareness of the symptoms presented by patients. One prime example is, the symptoms of hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism presenting itself in some form of mental illness. It's so easy for a medical professional to write on a slip of paper a prescription for anti-depressants rather than to start the routine of testing for the malfunctioning of the thyroid gland.

My own experience – which, unlike many - I am thankful for. When I presented my family doctor with my symptoms – so tired I could not keep my head up at work, etc. – he asked, “did I have my thyroid checked lately?” I looked at him in amazement – almost wanting to laugh – asking why - not having a clue why he was asking me about my thyroid. I had suggested to

him I might need antibiotics, as I was feeling so unwell, and other conditions, which I didn't even realize at the time – thinking my problem was a virus of some kind. I was tired all the time, forcing myself to do what was necessary at home for my husband and four children as well as at work.

Being part of a management team I could not afford to be tired and not see that things were being run properly, especially in client related operation, which is partially what forced me to seek medical help. A blood test followed and within short time I was diagnosed with hypothyroidism.

When I recall the management of my condition, I often wonder how things have changed with treatments or did my doctor really know how to treat my thyroid condition. The general rule today is one pill of a designated dose per day, which keeps the body in somewhat of a normal functioning state. That's the method of treatment I have been using for the last 25 years with blood tests done on a regular basis to determine my levels, adjusting whenever necessary. To say the pill a day fixed my thyroid problem – I can't say it did but it did help me have much better quality of life than I would have without it. When first diagnosed my family doctor decided I needed to be treated with very heavy dosages of the medication at once. So instead of prescribing one pill per day, I was given a dosage of 4 pills a day for a period of time – then 3 pills a day for another period of time – then 2 per



day until I reduced my dosage down to 1 per day. Thinking back I wonder if this was right or wrong – my thinking it wasn't right. Could that have caused damage to my body – I don't know? Hopefully it didn't but maybe could have if the process continued for any longer a period of time.

To me, the term **thyroid** sounded like a part of a motor vehicle – “**tie-rod**” (most men know what that is). That term, I was more familiar with rather than “**thyroid**”. My husband being an Automotive Technician Instructor, automotive terms were part of the daily vocabulary at home. Well, I came to find out that maybe there is a connection nevertheless between the meaning of the 2 terms “tie-rods and thyroid”. As stated by the automotive experts– if a tie-rod fails – you are in serious risk of losing control of your car. And so it goes without saying – we know now if our thyroid fails, we too could be in serious risk of losing control of ourselves.

There are so many stories out there from misdiagnosis of thyroid disease - many have felt the lost feeling of losing control mostly due to the lack of knowledge of what exactly was happening to their bodies. Also a lack

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of knowledge or awareness of the symptoms of thyroid disease in the medical community is a deterrent to following the right path for diagnosis. Often stories are told by patients of the horrific experiences they encountered due to doctors not having knowledge enough to look at a simple test which can determine whether the thyroid is the problem or not.

Awareness is the key – so we can do something about it and get properly diagnosed. The need for programs such as are available through the Thyroid Foundation of Canada are a vital part of helping the public understand what the malfunctioning of a thyroid can do.

Research is desperately needed to take a deeper look at what thyroid disease is all about and if traditional medicine is the only way to treat those who find themselves with a failing thyroid gland.

Support to those who find themselves with thyroid disease of any sort is a must. With thyroid cancer on the increase (or being diagnosed earlier) the need for information about the management of this condition which carries this dreaded word “cancer” is a must. And so it goes for all other thyroid conditions i.e. hypothyroidism,

hyperthyroidism, Graves’ disease, thyroid nodules and on it goes.

Let’s all jump on board and help The Thyroid Foundation of Canada with their efforts in the management of thyroid disease. You could be helping yourself, a family member, a friend, a co-worker or neighbour and on it goes.

Just ask someone tomorrow did they ever hear of thyroid disease – I doubt very much if you’ll get “no” for an answer.

A personal story that’s still evolving as time goes by and into the golden years.

Mabel Miller

