

JEAN-SÉBASTIEN'S STORY

I joined the Thyroid Foundation of Canada about a year and a half ago as Treasurer and Board Director. Since then, our President has encouraged me to tell my thyroid story, and so I am glad to be able to do that in this edition of Thyrobuletin.

In my late teenage years, I noticed a lump on the left side of my chest right below the nipple (gynecomastia). Since I was active in sports where there was physical contact, I couldn't ignore the lump since any contact was somewhat painful. After consulting with a doctor, I was told that it was likely just a hormonal imbalance that would not persist. I had the mass removed and went about my business. A couple of years later, I was faced with the same situation, as another growth had formed in the exact same spot. This time, I was referred to an endocrinologist who ended up diagnosing me with Graves' Disease. Again, I had the lump removed, but this time I was prescribed thyroid medication to manage by TSH levels. Since that time, I have had no recurrence of the gynecomastia and have been able to manage my thyroid function through regular blood tests, although my dosage has increased over time.

While the medical part of my story is fairly straightforward as far as thyroid issues go, it nevertheless had an impact on me in more ways than I realised until much later. With the benefit of hindsight, I know now that the main immediate effect was fatigue, which led me to compensate by overeating and sleeping in morning classes. The former compensation engrained a bad habit that took some time to break in order to achieve healthy eating patterns. The latter compensation meant that I underperformed in school, which likely affects me indirectly to this day. Psychologically, the gynecomastia made me feel self-conscious, and negatively affected my confidence. Moreover, since it reoccurred, I was always worried that it might reoccur another time. I often cannot help but wonder what could have been possible in so many parts of my life had my condition been diagnosed earlier. In the end, letting those judgements go has probably been the most difficult part of living with thyroid disease.

More recently, I have had some issues with getting my thyroid medication dosage right. I have always been pretty active, but about five years ago I decided to be more consistent with my exercise regiment, joining a fitness centre and working out more frequently. The increased activity meant that I needed to increase my dosage to compensate. Luckily, regular monitoring and blood tests mean that I am now better able to identify changes in my thyroid function, making adjustments as needed.



These more recent problems, along with the evolution of my professional career, are the events that motivated me to apply to the Thyroid Foundation of Canada so that I could contribute to help others afflicted with thyroid issues. It has definitely been a positive learning experience and has allowed me to put my story in context with all of the other stories out there.

Jean-Sébastien Michel

New Thyroid Presentation Service for Your Organization



Donna Miniely

The Thyroid Foundation of Canada (TFC) is happy to announce a new service to provide organizations with an overview presentation of thyroid disease. The presentations are delivered by one of our experienced speakers using videoconferencing, such as Zoom. The length of the presentation is approximately 30-40 minutes long. It is followed by a question-and-answer period where attendees have an opportunity to ask general questions about thyroid disease. We do not provide medical advice for individual thyroid conditions.

Our current presenter is Donna Miniely, M.A., M.Ed., a past president of TFC, she is very knowledgeable of thyroid disease and has extensive experience with both adult education and remote learning.

Last year, TFC gave virtual presentations on thyroid disease to the Council for Black Aging Community of Montreal and to the Horizon Place Retirement Community in London, Ontario. Donna is scheduled to deliver a presentation to an immigrant women's group in Toronto in mid-November and another to the Manitoba Senior Centre Without Walls in April 2023. To arrange a TFC presentation for your organization, please contact us at 1-800-267-8822 or by email at info@thyroid.ca.