

TESTIMONY



Testimony
By
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On Behalf of
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International
Regarding Federal Support of Juvenile Diabetes Research
Before the
Senate Permanent Subcommittee on
Investigations

I was diagnosed in 1998. My parents thought that my weight loss, excessive thirst and stomach pains were related to my tough football workouts, but after football season was over my condition continued to worsen. I'll never forget the day that I was finally diagnosed. I felt that I would rather die than be forced to take shots for the rest of my life.

But diabetes isn't just about taking shots. Having diabetes makes everything about my life more difficult, and it makes it especially hard to do the things that I love most... like playing sports.

When I'm playing sports, having diabetes doesn't just affect me. It affects my family, my coaches, and my team. For example, my parents don't just go to my games; they go to all of my practices too. I'd like a little independence, but most coaches either don't want to be responsible for me, or they just don't "get" diabetes. Sure, my parents like to be supportive, but three hours a night, six days a week can seem to be a little over-supportive. Most of my teammates try to be helpful, but I always feel like my medical condition is on display. Other kids don't understand that diabetes doesn't go away when I take my insulin. They don't realize that I always have to be aware of how I feel, and that I have to be ready to make the right adjustments, no matter where we are in the game even if it means sitting out some of the game. If I'm playing hard, my blood sugars might go low, and I have to stop to have some sugar. If I'm not playing as hard as I expected to play, my blood

sugars could go high, and I could have blurry vision or lose my ability to concentrate on my coach's instructions.

This is hard for a lot of people to understand. Last year in Little League, I was having many abnormal blood sugars. My coaches didn't understand how diabetes works, so they assumed that I was goofing off when I needed to take breaks. Instead of listening to my parents and allowing me time to recover, they chose to bench me. I got a reputation for being uncooperative.

I'm looking forward to a cure in my lifetime. Diabetes is a slow killer. My grandmother, aunt and many other members of my family have had diabetes. They have suffered from eye disease, nerve problems and foot trouble. They have died from heart disease, gangrene and kidney disease. I want to live to be a healthy adult with children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

My dream for the future is to not be "the kid with diabetes" anymore but to just be Andy Webber. Research is the key to a cure but research requires money. Help me to live a long life and to be healthy enough to enjoy it. Please promise to remember me.

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