

Testimony

Kathleen Manganaro

Good afternoon my name is Kathleen Manganaro and I have traveled from Pittsburgh, PA to be here today. In 1983, I was 29 years old, married and mother of a 3 year old son when I went back to work as a school speech/language pathologist in four different schools ranging from kindergarten to high school. Up until that time I jogged regularly, was very energetic and in excellent health. In one of my buildings that I was assigned to, I had an office that had a roof leak, water damage and mold. I felt especially sick there and convinced the administrators to let me see students in an abandoned bathroom, that didn't make me feel quite as bad. I felt sick in that building from the very first day, with a variety of classic Chronic Fatigue Syndrome symptoms that got worse over time. In 1985 I saw an integrative physician who helped me regain some of my health with an anti mold protocol, after having spent two years seeing many doctors and specialists with no improvement. Others in that building had similar symptoms and one eventually had to quit working due to extreme fatigue. Six young teachers developed different cancers and died within a short time of diagnosis. In 1991 I had a twin twin transfusion pregnancy which I attribute to working in that building – I nearly died and the twins died shortly after birth. Fortunately in 1992, I was transferred from that building. My health got much better, though I never had the energy that I did before I went to work there.

From 1992 until 2003, my health was stable. Then in 2003, I was assigned to work in an office in one of my school's basements. I saw water marks on the wall, but no visible mold. My symptoms returned and got worse over time. Another person working in that office after me also got sick with symptoms, but she improved once she was assigned to a different part of the building. By May 2007, I had to stop working because I couldn't function. While on a half year sabbatical, there was some improvement with a variety of protocol. Then I went to a specialty CFS clinic, the Fibro and Fatigue Center in November 2007. Despite normal thyroid levels, the doctor gave me a large dose of T3 thyroid hormone without ramping it up slowly as part of their CFS treatment. Within a month I had a major heart attack that awoke me out of a sleep at 1:30 AM. The doctors I talked to afterward said that there was no other reason that I should have had a heart attack at all, and felt it was the thyroid medication. Obviously, that doctor acted negligently in giving me that thyroid hormone with normal thyroid levels and due to his lack of understanding of CFS, he misdiagnosed me as not having CFS and ruined my possibility of future recovery. Dr. Paul Cheney has verified I do indeed have CFS,

that I have gone in and out of this illness several times and that my heart will fail because of the damage of the heart attack and CFS.

My brother was an excellent physician, and before his death in a bicycle accident last summer, he looked into the medical literature and felt it was plausible that mold had made me sick. I've encountered others with classic ME/CFS who got sick as a result of mold exposures, and have recovered much of their health after getting away from it. I am fortunate that the toxins were in my workplace and not in my home, because I have been able to regain some of my health as a result of not being in a toxic environment any longer. I can go out weekly if someone drives, spend time on the computer and in my garden, manage the house and cook light meals, if I pace. But visit a moldy building for even 15 minutes, I will be back in bed for days. Insecticide exposures are equally as devastating. If mold is a part of my CFS, then it's probably a part of CFS for at least a segment of other patients as well. As a speech pathologist, I saw the importance of early intervention in preventing dysfunctions from becoming permanent. If that had been done in my case and I was managed with the proper treatment, I wouldn't be disabled today.

Not everyone in the buildings where I worked got sick. I've been told that some people are more genetically predisposed to the affects of mold and toxins. Some people say that the retrovirus XMRV can make people more susceptible to mold and toxins. Regardless of what made me susceptible, I was never sick prior to the first mold exposure in the 80's and didn't get sick again until the second exposure in the mid 2000's.