

## Testimony

Karen Burroughs

About 16 years ago my life drastically changed. I was a personal trainer and mother of two, stronger than most men but still a mommy at heart. I came home from the gym so that I could be at the house before my daughter came home from school. I noticed driving home I felt a little unusual. I hadn't been to a doctor for any illness in over 10 years, so surely I must have just overdone it at the gym. By the time I reached my home, I was shaking and weak. I had trouble making it to the second floor bed. "Whatever this is, I'll be over it in a day or so. I am too healthy to get sick!" Little did I understand that for the next decade plus, I would never return to that gym or a normal way of life. Friends slowly dropped off as my "little illness" never abated. I was so weak, I had to lie down on the landing of the stairs to make it. I had to ask my daughter to become the head of our household and cook and clean. I could do none of that. I made appointments with cardiologist, infectious disease doctors, internists, allergist... but no "real" illness could be found. I was weak and so sick feeling. I ran a temperature of 100+ degrees for three months but still some doctors said it was "in my head". "No no, you don't understand. I love my life, my job my working out. I am not angry, hurt whatever... I am SICK". Finally a doctor said "you have what I think is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome". "What is that?", I asked.

So began my journey into the world of the disabled. I have never recovered, though I did have a year when I felt better. I spend 18 hours a day in bed, frequently have infections and still no one to really help me. My government ignored me and never felt I was important enough to devote research spending towards.

Now the unthinkable has happened. I knew it get worse for me but I never expected to hear that my son now has the same illness. He lives 2000 miles away and was an avid skier with a exploding career. He was his classes *most likely to succeed*, recipient of a full four year Air Force scholarship and was working on top secret military projects as a Captain, soon to go for his Major's. "NO NO NO, this is just not right" my head has echoed many times. It isn't right but it is true. Now the government doesn't care much for either of us. Doctors want us to go away. Really, they do. I think it's because we puncture the "God" bubble, for they can do nothing to help us or find the cause of this horrible illness.

Please, please devote research money for the millions of those like my son and I. We have suffered and have had almost no help. Our numbers are increasing. Who doesn't know someone who has CFS or Fibro? Few.

Please, please establish clinical trials of antiretroviral at multiple locations through out the US. Most of us are sick enough we cannot travel far to get any help. Bring help to us. Don't abandon us again. Please, I am lying here in bed in tears for my son, myself and all those who's lives are ticking by with no help for our sickness and pain. We will die here in our beds because there is no one who has cared enough to insist that research funding is in place for our immune system illnesses.

Don't turn your back on me. Don't ignore my son and his lost life.  
You have the power we do not have. Please help us have a life worth living.

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