

Testimony of Jack Schmittlein

**Age 13, JDRF Children's Congress Delegate
from Avon, Connecticut**

At the Hearing entitled:

"Transforming Lives Through Diabetes Research"

Wednesday, June 22, 2011, 1:30 p.m.

Before the

Senate Committee on

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

G-50 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C.

Thank you, Senator Collins, Senator Lieberman, and Members of the Committee for inviting me to testify. My name is Jack Schmittlein. I am 13 years old, and I have had juvenile diabetes for over six years.

On October 4, 2004, my life changed forever with my diagnosis. Instead of being a carefree kindergartner, I was faced with pricking my fingers 8-10 times a day, counting carbs, and taking insulin shots. Managing diabetes is hard work that lasts 24 hours a day, every day.

Two years ago, my best friend Peter was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Before, he had been incredibly helpful in managing my disease, even keeping me company when I walk to the nurse's office to check my blood sugar. Peter and his family learned everything they could about diabetes so I could come over to play at their house safely. Peter's diagnosis is just one more reason why I work to raise awareness about type 1, and one more reason why I am here today.

Important research to find a cure is happening all over the nation, even at Yale University in my home state of Connecticut, to better understand the causes of type 1 diabetes and ways to prevent it. I am grateful that Congress passed legislation to renew the Special Diabetes Program last year. This program is central to helping to find a cure for type 1 diabetes.

The Special Diabetes Program has allowed for research that has led to the artificial pancreas. An artificial pancreas would help prevent my blood sugar from dropping and give me insulin if my blood sugar gets too high.

Right now, I have to get up to check my blood sugar in the middle of the night every night. It would make participating in activities that I love a whole lot easier. I really enjoy playing basketball and football, but I often have to come out in the middle of the game to test my blood sugar. It would give me my life back so I can just feel like a kid again... not a kid with diabetes!

Despite this incredible technology, we need to do everything we can to find a cure. I am doing my part to help continue to push life-saving research forward. I have been a JDRF Walk Team Captain for four years, have organized a walk at my school to benefit JDRF and have also spoken about life with diabetes at two Walks, a school assembly, and a Promise Ball fundraiser as a JDRF Youth Ambassador.

It is my hope that Congress will continue to support research at NIH, specifically the Special Diabetes Program. I really believe that we will find a cure for type 1 diabetes. The artificial pancreas is a promising result after strong investment in research.

I look forward to the day that I can say “I used to have diabetes.” Until that day, an artificial pancreas will greatly improve my daily life, and the lives of other kids who have type 1 diabetes. I know that Congress and JDRF are doing all that they can to make this possible for kids like me.

Just think: if we could improve the lives of millions of children and adults around the world, why wouldn't we?

Research being conducted all over the country is bringing us closer to a cure, and the development of the artificial pancreas could help keep us healthy while we wait for a cure.

Thank you, Chairwoman Collins and Members of the Committee, for providing me the opportunity to give you a glimpse into what my life is like with diabetes. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.