

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**

My name is Rachel Dudley. I'm 15 years old and live in Southfield, Michigan. Nearly 12 years and 12,300 shots ago I was a disease free child. However along came a crippling disease, named diabetes, to turn my world upside-down.

At the age of four, my mother noticed that I had lost weight, I was constantly thirsty, and my eyes were sunken in. She made an appointment with my pediatrician. After my doctor examined me, she sent us directly to the hospital. On the way, I remember asking my mother if I was going to die. She looked at me and said, "Not if I have anything to do with it." During the 2 weeks I was in the hospital, the doctors told my mother that if she had waited any longer to bring me in, I might have gone into a diabetic coma.

For the 9 years that followed, my mother had complete control of my diabetes management and I was in good health. It was not until I entered adolescence and began wanting to do things my way that my health began to deteriorate. Several times a day my mom would ask if I had checked my blood sugar level and if I had taken my insulin. I would always tell her what she wanted to hear even though I sometimes ignored my blood sugar reading and injected the wrong amount of insulin. Occasionally, I even injected the insulin into the toilet instead of into my arm. Looking back, I simply did not want to have diabetes and I thought that I could be like a "normal" kid by simply ignoring the necessity of my daily routine. I wanted to eat when, where, and whatever I wanted, just like my friends. I

wanted to be like them and so... I became like them. I didn't take correct insulin dosages—sometimes I didn't take it at all—I didn't eat according to my diet and I ignored my mother.

Because of this behavior, my body – being driven by my blood sugar - was on a wild roller-coaster ride. When my blood sugar was low, my vision was blurred and I walked into things and acted as though I was drunk. When it was high, I would feel sick and have bad headaches. And, I would feel terribly thirsty and in spite of drinking quarts of water, I could never quench my thirst. All of this was caused by my simple desire to be like other kids.

This mindset earned me a two-week stay in the hospital, including 3 days in the intensive care unit, at the age of 13. I learned that my kidneys had almost shut down. I came to understand that because of my desire to be like my friends, I had almost died.

During day after day of testing and treatment and conversation and training by specialists at Children's Hospital, I finally understood that if I wanted to live, I must accept the reality of diabetes as the top priority in my life. I finally understood that anything less than rigorous control of my diabetes management was inviting serious health problems. I finally understood that without insulin, I would die in a matter of days.

While I was in intensive care, my mother and I made a pact. Our pact was: if I would do everything in my power to stay healthy, she would do everything in her power to find a cure. We have both remained true to our promises. Since 1999, my mother has raised nearly \$20,000 for JDRF. Me? I follow my diet, I exercise, and I always take the correct amount of insulin according to my blood sugar level. But, does this make me well? Absolutely not! Until a cure is found, I will always have diabetes. And, having diabetes means that I am always just a few hours away from blurred vision, headaches and nausea... just a few days away from a hospital stay. And at this very moment, if I no longer have access to insulin, I am no more than a week away from death.

At another time in my childhood, I asked my mother about the civil rights struggle and her encounters with racism. She said that she had marched and advocated for equal rights for all people so that her children would not have to. Years from now, when my children ask me about my struggles with diabetes, I

will tell them about this day and I will say, "I testified before the United States Congress in Washington D.C. and I passionately urged the leaders of this great nation to fund the research to find a cure for diabetes. And I did that so that hundreds of thousands of kids like you would not have to."

Today, I ask the men and women in this great place, those who have the power and influence to alter the direction of our nation's resolve... will you do whatever you can... whatever it takes... whatever must be done... to increase funding for research to find a cure for diabetes?

Today, will you remember the two hundred kids who have come to the nation's capital to give a face and a story to this very real, very dangerous disease?

Today, I ask you to promise to remember us!!

Thank You!

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