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Member Spotlight:

An Interview with Deborah Howery

How long have you had MCS?

Around 20 to 25 years. Unlike most people, my onset was very insidious, so that at first, I often mistook reactions for classic allergies. However, medications for classical asthma & allergies all caused worse reactions than the original reactions. Neither I nor my doctors knew about MCS back then, either, so I was pretty much in the dark as to what was happening to me. They sure didn't teach us about MCS in nursing school during the early 80's.

I cannot point to one poisoning as my onset. There were several, that built up over time. Pesticide poisoning, coolant from machine tools, mold, building materials from remodeling my bathroom and overuse of antibiotics all contributed.

What's the hardest part about having this DISease?

Not being able to seek medical help when I need it, because mainstream medicines usually do more harm than good, but mostly due to fear of heavy exposures from fragrances, disinfectants, air fresheners, etc. at medical facilities.

What's the funniest thing that's happened to you since you've been ill? [something that could only happen to someone with MCS]

It was at a star gaze in a state park. The cleaning ladies had filled the pit toilets with some horribly strong smelling pine oil. It was so strong, I couldn't even enter the bathroom, much less use it. After holding my urine for several hours, I was about to explode. It's cold in the woods at 3am.in March! So, I crept behind

one of our vehicles, Kleenex in hand, got long johns, jeans & whatever else I had on pulled down, then attempted to sit on one of those concrete parking bumps, so as not to wet any of my clothes. Well, I missed the "seat", fell & yeah, you guessed it. There I am laying in the grass with half of my clothing around my ankles, peeing away. I started laughing so hard, I was afraid the other astronomers would hear me & come looking for me. They were only a couple of yards away, & all males of course. It all worked out just fine though. No one came. I managed to dry myself off, get up, dressed & went back to the star party. I think they heard me, but were too polite to ask. ☺

What would you like to have known about MCS in the early stages?

That repeated exposures would make my condition worse. Had no idea this was the case, so did not make nearly enough effort to avoid toxic exposures. Had I known, & taken better care, I might not be nearly as sick as I am now.

Are there any tips you'd like to pass on to someone whose just discovered they have MCS?

Try to find a good EI doc & a classical homeopath. Practice avoidance as much as possible, even if it seems silly. Eliminate as many chemicals as you can from your environment. Learn to use safe natural personal care & cleaning products. Educate & encourage your family & friends to use less toxic products. Protect yourself by keeping a mask, hat & long sleeved shirt in your car for times when you have to enter toxic places...

Join an MCS support group, makes life so much more enjoyable to be able to relate to others who have gone through many of the same things we have, & who have to deal with the ridiculous way we have to live. Keep your sense of humor. Try to eat as much organic, whole natural food as possible. What you put into your body matters as much as what you put on it.

Kathy Fitzpatrick