

Hello,

My name is Derek Dunham, and I am an Oregonian. I was born in Albany, Oregon in the year 1982 and have lived here for the majority of my childhood and adult life.

I am writing today to share my healthcare testimony with you.

When I was aged 22, I began attending Oregon State University in Corvallis. I was the first person in my family to attend college, and due to my family's poverty I possessed no medical insurance.

During this time, I began infrequently experiencing a recurring pain in my abdomen which at one point became so debilitating that I could do nothing but scream. This pain occurred very infrequently, but when it happened I was completely physically debilitated and in more pain than I had ever experienced at the time.

During the worst bout of this abdominal pain, I went to Samaritan Albany General Hospital where I was told after examination that I had a form of obstructive gallbladder disease that could have proven fatal during any of the episodes I had experienced. I was told that I needed surgery immediately. I was told that I should avoid all proteins and fats, as they could trigger another episode.

I told the doctor in the emergency room that I had no health insurance, and no money. That I was attending college on loans, and that I had no way to fund an operation.

The doctor released me without treatment, and said that he hoped I would find a way to pay for the surgery.

I experienced two more bouts of the same illness, and twice more I attempted to seek help via the Samaritan Albany General Hospital's ER. Twice more I was admitted to the ER, and twice more released with no treatment. They let me lay on an Emergency Room bed until the crystals I would later learn were blocking my duodenal channels had cleared, thankfully without my death.

These obstructive episodes were so painful that during each of them, I was ambivalent as to whether I would live or die. I was given no pain medicine, and no treatment even though it was confirmed medically by the ER physician during each visit that each of these episodes were intensely painful, and that any of them could result in my death.

I began urinating blood in the fall of the year 2005. By then my skin and hair were dry and flaky, and my muscles atrophied for going much of the year without eating protein and fats in order to avoid death-- though the pain of another episode was what I feared the most.

I was taken to the emergency room in Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis when I didn't show up for class or work for nearly a week following the worst episode yet. I was seen by the head of gastroenterology at the time, who agreed to perform surgery.

The surgery went normally, and my life was saved. I was presented with a medical bill of over \$80,000.

I was forced to drop out of school and find a job to support myself. I had possessed no medical insurance, so I had been undeserving of life or opportunity. The only avenue available to me was immediate employment.

I think the only reason the surgeon in Corvallis agreed to operate on me was because I had told him that I'd been denied surgery before, and he feared I would die on his watch... that there would be negative consequences or liability if he didn't act.

I never got a chance to earn the Pharmacy degree I had been studying for, nor any degree.

At this time, I am still paying off my student loans however.

Please feel free to share my story with others.

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Sincerely,

Derek Dunham

Precinct Committee Person

Linn County, District 97