

In March of 2013, I found myself in hospital after sustaining an open wound fracture to the right leg. This injury left me hospitalized at Steve Biko Academic Hospital for 4.5 months. During this period I was in the orthopaedic ward with 5 other ladies. Among the ladies in the ward, I shared the room with Alexandria Mulder. She had been hospitalized with a condition called **CFS** (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) and **ME** (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) which would leave her bones in a brittle condition.

[According to the “**ME Association Informing and supporting those affected by ME / CFS**” website (which can be found at this link: <http://www.meassociation.org.uk/about/what-is-mecfs/>)

What is CFS/ME?

Several research studies looking at prognosis in ME/CFS have now been published (Bombardier and Buchwald 1995; Hinds et al 1993; Sharpe et al 1992; Vercoulen et al 1996; Wilson et al 1994). **Results from these studies indicate that ME/CFS often becomes a chronic and very disabling illness with complete recovery only occurring in a small minority of cases. The high level of debility and disability associated with ME/CFS often stems from a combination of symptoms such as fatigue, pain, sleep disturbance, cognitive impairment, and, in some cases, an associated depression.**

Treatment

There is currently no accepted cure and no universally effective treatment. Those treatments which have helped reduce particular symptoms in some people have unfortunately proved ineffective or even counterproductive in others. An early diagnosis together with adequate rest during the acute phase and during any relapse appear to bring the most significant improvement.

What Causes CFS/ME

According to <http://www.name-us.org/>

The possible CAUSE of ME:

The cause of ME is unknown, but collective research suggests that an initial immune system insult - usually a virus, but sometimes toxic exposure, bacterial infection, trauma, or other physical stressors - trigger a cascade of immune system dysfunction that results in a cascade of CNS damage. A vicious cycle among these and other interconnected body wide systems explains the many and varied symptoms of M.E.

The doctors informed her that she would slowly become paralysed as her bones will become too weak to hold her weight and inevitably she would be wheelchair bound. The state doesn't even provide her with counselling, she is receiving counselling pro bono, the state also wouldn't provide her with a wheelchair. She does, however, qualify for SASSA which is a government disability grant. Unfortunately this disability grant is not enough to support herself let alone buy herself a wheelchair.

Going through my own battles, I quickly forgot about her and carried on with my own healing. It was in June of 2015 (2.5 years later) that Alexandria had tried to make contact with me, but with no reply from my side, September she made contact again, but I still hadn't replied because I had no idea

who it was. She tried on one last attempt to make contact with me in April of this year, where I finally answered her and asked her who it was. The conversation quickly progressed to how her condition was going. It saddened me to know that it was getting worse and that there is no known cure for what she is going through.

Hearing from her after more than 3 years of meeting her in the hospital made me realise how blessed I have been in my walk to recovery and made me realise that not everyone was as blessed as I have been.

At the time of speaking to Alexandria she was in a cast with a broken ankle which she sustained while walking on the sidewalk. She has been in and out of hospital since 2013 approximately 16 times no less than 2 weeks at a time, and the longest time being 1 month.



Alexandria's Ankle April 2016



Thanks to **LifeNets** and **Surgimed Hospital Supplies** Alexandria is now mobile and can join her family on outings instead of staying at home as she has been doing.



Alexandria currently has a wrist guard to prevent her wrist from breaking, as well as a leg brace on her left leg and a moon boot on her right leg.



The wheel chair sponsored to Alexandria