

Brenda Brodrick- ADULT FMD

My name is Brenda Brodrick and I live in Olathe, Kansas.

Although I had symptoms earlier in my life, my diagnosis begins in 1995, when during a routine Dr. visit my blood pressure was high. My pressure was too high for a person like myself that was not overweight, ate healthily, taught dance lessons, and exercised regularly.



It took about two and a half years of testing to find out that I have Fibromuscular Dysplasia. A kidney specialist in Massachusetts suggested I have an arteriogram because he suspected this was what I had. After my first visit to the OR I cried tears of "relief" to finally know I had a name to go with what was happening to me. I also cried tears of "sadness" finding out that this disease was "treatable, but not curable." This would be....is something, I have to deal with throughout my lifetime. My FMD is located in my renal arteries, and up to writing this I have had five renal angioplasties. My celiac artery also has some narrowing, but during a recent angioplasty it was discovered that other branch arteries had formed to compensate for this. The human body can be quite amazing when it can protect you in this way.

One of the most painful times in my life was having a renal infarction. After being admitted in the hospital that time, an aneurysm was discovered on the wall of an artery to my kidney. Not knowing if this aneurysm might rupture, or get bigger, or what other problems it may cause along with other symptoms, can be overwhelming at times.

My hope for this disease, is certain tests one day can be as good as those tests that use radiation, and will not expose patients to radiation. Some of the tests I have to have can be harmful over time. In the number of years since being diagnosed, the technology being used for arteriograms and angioplasty has greatly improved. I have had an earlier experience in the OR where I passed out from the procedure, to now having a much shorter recovery time in the hospital after the procedure.

One of the most wonderful things has been finding support through people I have meet through the FMDSA. For the first 12 years after being diagnosed I had never met anyone with this rare disease. After attending an FMDSA conference in Cleveland, it was life-changing for me. I finally could talk with someone who understood what I was going through. It was an overwhelming experience to finally meet people who were "like me". This was very comforting. Many times I feel very alone with this disease, but I know there are other people out there that struggle with the same things I do with FMD.

FMD is something that I have to live with every day. The most difficult part is the not knowing what is going to happen next. Each time I have had angioplasty it seems to work for awhile, then slowly over time my blood pressure rises back up again to dangerous levels, and narrowing in the arteries has to be dealt with too. I experience kidney pain quite often and when I do always hope it's not going to turn into something greater! I have learned that my frame of mind can either make me stronger because of what I have, or it can take me down. There are many "down days," but to continue to do the things I love to do, I try to think of why I am stronger because of this disease.