

Risa's Story

My name is Risa and I have Acromegaly.

Not too long ago, I was an endurance athlete, 14er climbing, outdoor enthusiast. I was a sharp, detail-oriented, highly motivated Executive Assistant. The part of me that remains is still a wife, a dog mom, baking hobbyist, lover of travel, and has an endless desire for personal growth. In October 2018, my life was turned on its side. I was diagnosed with a golf ball-sized tumor on my Pituitary Gland. Furthermore, it was causing a rare disease that I had never even heard of. Three months later, I underwent a 6 1/2 hour brain surgery and spent 9 days in the ICU and 12 days in the hospital.

In the months following my surgery, I was certain I'd be back to "normal" in no time, back to my passion of road cycling, spending time in nature, and enjoying laughter with friends. This was not the case. I soon learned that a portion of the tumor remained wrapped around my carotid artery and it was inoperable....it is inoperable, and it continues to wreak havoc on my body.

I spent 2019 recovering from not only the physical impacts, but also the mental trauma of a life-altering diagnosis. I am still recovering, and I continue to work with my Endocrinologist to get my hormone-related disease under control. This experience has taken a toll on my body, mind, and spirit.



In my efforts to heal and move forward, I am doing what I can to spread awareness around rare Pituitary diseases /disorders. Acromegaly is a hormone disorder caused by a tumor on the Pituitary Gland. The tumor causes the Pituitary to dump excessive amounts of growth hormone into the body causing a multitude of symptoms and possible death if left untreated. Often, the symptoms can be easily explained away and these tumors go undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed for decades, by then, much damage has already been done.

So what next? I know I have to heal more than just my body. I have to heal my heart and my soul. I will spend this year training and by Fall of 2020, I will be ready to ride my bike (solo) from Canada to Mexico down the Pacific Coast. Along the way, I plan to talk with the public, newspapers, local news stations, and anyone who will listen, in order to spread information about Pituitary diseases. Additionally, I have become a Certified Gestalt Practitioner so that I might

help others going through life-changing health diagnosis; not only do diagnoses like these cause physical ailments, they can have a major emotional and mental impact.

It has been 482 days since my diagnosis. For the past one year, three months, and 25 days I have been focused on learning about my disease and coming to terms with my new reality. Looking ahead, my life is different. I have a long road ahead and a very uncertain future. Not only are my efforts healing for me, my hope is that I will also save lives.

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To read more about my story, struggles, and efforts go to:
<https://www.pituitaryworldnews.org/risas-story/>

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