

Meet an Activist

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE



My name is Scott Hanson. I live with multiple sclerosis and this is my story. I used to work 60 to 80 hours per week. During that time, one of the first occasions that I experienced MS symptoms was in a meeting at work. I lost feeling in my legs. Trying to test this new desensitization, I started to strike my feet against the floor.

Scott Hanson, diagnosed in 1998

Because I could not feel anything, I could not gauge how hard they were hitting the floor. My “experiment” soon caught the attention of others at the meeting and I was told to stop.

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis on July 28, 1998, at the age of 26. I sought medical care after getting “pushed” into do so after falling down some stairs one morning. I tripped because my legs were not placing well and my balance was acting up. Though I stopped myself from rolling down the stairs by grabbing onto the hand railing, the crashing noise led a friend to insist that I finally see a doctor, which I did.

When I was diagnosed with MS, I feared not being able to work. Fortunately, I am still working, something I’m told 90 percent of people living with MS cannot do 10 years after being diagnosed. Because of the good benefits I get through my employer, unlike many other MS patients, I can afford to pay for my medication. If I lose my ability to work, I will lose my insurance as well.

The price of my medicine — Interferon-B — also keeps increasing. My wife, Abbey, recently picked up my medication from the pharmacy. When I got home, she handed me the box of the medicine, noting that the color of the box had changed.

She was worried about whether or not the box contained the same medicine that I usually got from the pharmacist. I told her they must have changed the price. I have noticed that when the box’s colors change, the price usually increases.

This therapy is probably slowing my MS. It cost \$960 in 2002. Now it costs \$2,800 per month. However, the medicine has not gotten any more effective even as the price has increased in frequent intervals. It has increased by \$200 in the past six months alone. A person living in Germany can buy a more inexpensive, generic version of my same medication. But I, in the United States, cannot because the FDA does not yet have the clear pathway to review and approve follow on (or generic) versions of biologic drugs.

I support lower prescription drug costs. I support continuing in the workplace as long as possible. I support efforts to empower the FDA to approve generic versions of biologic drugs. And I support easing the financial and emotional burden on families with MS.