

PARALYZED WITHOUT WARNING – A COUPLE’S JOURNEY BACK FROM GUILLAIN-BARRE SYNDROME

Suzan and John Jennings went through an unexpected and harrowing ordeal. Within six days, Suzan went from being perfectly normal to total paralysis from the neck down. She had been stricken with a little known condition called Guillain-Barre Syndrome [GBS]. This condition was caused by her immune system mistakenly identifying her nerves as an enemy to destroy.

Suzan’s honest account of her experience with GBS in this presentation highlights the important emotional impact of an acute medical illness on the patient and the family, from the patient’s perspective. You will also hear from Dr. Kristine Chapman, a neurologist at UBC and VGH, who shared Suzan’s amazing journey from diagnosis, to treatment, to recovery and the triumphs along the way.

Dr. Chapman will describe the tests used to diagnose GBS and explain how plasmapheresis [also known as plasma exchange] and high-dose IVIG immunoglobulin therapy are used to treat GBS. This presentation will be of special interest to those MLTs working in transfusion medicine.

This is an inspirational story of how Suzan used her wonderful sense of humour, charisma and determination to deal with the significant challenges that have come her way. Put yourself in her shoes, and take this journey with her.

Producer’s note: recent news stories have highlighted a possible link between GBS and the Zika Virus.