



University of Michigan
Health System

Chronic Pain & Fatigue
Research Center

Department of Anesthesiology
Lobby M
24 Frank Lloyd Wright Drive
PO Box 385
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0385
(734) 998-6939
(734) 998-6900 fax
www.med.umich.edu/painresearch

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Janet Favero Chambers
President
National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association

Dear Ms. Chambers:

I write to recommend Cassandra Marcella Metzger, whom I've known for 11 years, for your 2012 Leaders Against Pain program. Cassandra has given me permission to disclose the nature of our relationship and encouraged me to provide a forthright opinion. When she was first diagnosed with Fibromyalgia on August 7, 2001, I worked with Dr. Leonard Sigal at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. I came to know her well over the first few years after her diagnosis while counseling her and teaching her cognitive behavioral therapy for pain management. She also participated in a biofeedback study with enthusiasm and conscientiousness.

I came to appreciate her expressiveness, articulation and writing skills over time. For example, when I needed a first-hand account of the rigors of living with fatigue for an industry-sponsored "think tank," Cassandra provided me with this:

Two general aspects of fatigue affect those with FM - physical weakness and mental exhaustion. As if a leaden sheath has encased your body, your limbs weigh heavily and any movement requires concentrated effort. This incapacitation can seem to freeze the pain, and the inactivity often makes the pain sit in siege, a stalemated battle at best, but one that can deteriorate as the days pass and the siege continues. But the mental weariness is worse and magnifies both the physical fatigue and pain. A listless spirit or dulled mental faculties entangle all efforts to contend with FM and complicates the work necessary to resist the tide of despair - whether to perform the mental gymnastics to produce a positive outlook, or to be mindful of best habits, or to figure out how to mitigate the pain, or even to remember to take a pill. Even on the most physically impaired days, if I have the mental acuity to be observant and attentive, I can then conjure appropriate responses and remedies and ameliorate my condition. Not only is my sense of self sharper and more nimble, so is my sense of humor, which helps on this journey most of all.

Her description ended up as a major focus of discussion. Steven Closter, the Executive Director of Forest Laboratories, asked me to put the two of them together so he could chat with her to gain more of her insights and to identify strong patient voices.

I cannot imagine a better candidate for your Leader's Against Pain program. I know her to have an active political mind, and she enjoys living in our nation's capital because of her interest in policy, politics and activism. She has a law degree from the Washington College of Law and a master of arts in writing from Johns Hopkins. She also worked on Capitol Hill and knows how Congress works. Finally, in addition to her writing and speaking skills, she is passionate and deeply caring.

In my opinion, you would be lucky to have her. She'd be an articulate and appealing advocate for all patients and for your organization. I hope you will be able to allow her to participate!

Sincerely,

Afton L. Hassett, Psy.D.
Associate Research Scientist

Campus Address:
Domino's Farms Lobby M
SPC 5737