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Pre-Rounds

Life With Diabetes: A Patient's Perspective

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A few years ago, a young woman went online to express her long, complicated relationship with diabetes. She not only found an audience, she also found a career. Now, Kerri Morrone is a columnist and editor, but she credits sharing her struggles and triumphs on her blog, [Six Until Me](#), with doing the most to help ease the burden of her disease.

Dr. Genes: Is it fair to say that you're a blogging success story? What were you doing when you started the blog, and how did it lead to your current employment?

Kerri Morrone: Before I started Six Until Me, I worked in insurance. Aviation insurance. Did you know that I'm scared to pieces of flying, and I hate insurance? It was a bad combination. Luckily, my blog caught the attention of the managing editor at [dLife](#), and after a few months as a regular columnist, I was invited to join the editorial team. So my writing and my success with the blog led to my current employment at dLife. Not a bad gig, that.

However, living with diabetes and writing about it constantly does wear a bit. That's where my freelance writing gigs come in. Having effectively cultivated my "diabetes writing voice," it's been exciting to branch out and write about something other than my inefficient pancreas.

Dr. Genes: Becoming a full-time writer was a goal of yours; were you surprised that diabetes was so involved in making it happen?

Kerri Morrone: If, 5 years ago, you had told me that diabetes would be the niche market I would find myself thriving in, I would have said you were bananas. Or nuts. Some variation on that sundae theme, anyway. However, that's how it's played out. And I feel very lucky to have enjoyed this success.

Blogging has given me more confidence to write whatever comes naturally. There's something about describing very intimate moments and posting them for the whole Internet world to see that steels up your backbone (for example, the moment I found out that there was [the beginning of a diabetic complication developing in my eye](#)). People have varying responses to whatever I post, but I don't live for comments. I don't write the blog so that I can have attention. I write this because I felt alone with diabetes, and blogging helped to make the burden a bit lighter. That means more than comments or stat counts or emails. Just knowing people are out there, living a life with diabetes that is so like my own, makes a world of difference.

Kerri Morrone at Six Until Me hosts [Grand Rounds](#)
January 16, 2007

Dr. Genes: You've written, movingly, that you're living a full life, that you're not limited by diabetes, that you can do anything with some extra planning. But on the flip side, you write about the highs and lows that are evoked with each blood sugar measurement. You even title your blog "Six Until Me" -- as if to say that you weren't you until you became diabetic at the age of 6. So, if diabetes doesn't define your life, can it be a hugely important thing that colors your moods and dictates your behavior?

Kerri Morrone: Ah, the ubiquitous title question. "Six Until Me" refers to the age that I was when I was diagnosed with

type 1 diabetes. The "six" is the number of years. The "me," however, isn't Kerri. The "me" is diabetes itself. Six years until diabetes. It's best explained in this post, "[She Still Smiles](#)."

As the tag line on my blog reads, "Diabetes doesn't define me, but it helps explain me." [This post](#) pretty much sums up my perspective on this:

Such perspective is gained from a chronic condition, regardless of its complications. It doesn't define me, but the strongest parts of my personality may have been gently shaped by the perspective gained from having it.

Diabetes didn't make me love with such ease, but having tasted my own mortality makes every hug, every laugh, every kiss that much more needed and appreciated.

I hope so fiercely for a cure. I hope for a cure every time I see a press release about new research breakthroughs. I hope every time I test my bloodsugar that the numbers will always be in range. I hope every time I go to Joslin. I hope every day...

When I wake up every morning and test my bloodsugar, when I prime the pump, when I calculate the carbohydrates in a meal, I know it doesn't define me. But when I am feeling anxious or scared about my medical future or just simply overwhelmed, I know it doesn't define me. It just helps explain me.

Dr. Genes: I'm curious: If diabetes is cured tomorrow, will you miss this role that you've carved out for yourself in the community?

Kerri Morrone: If diabetes is cured tomorrow, I will wait in whatever line necessary to rid my body of this disease, even if it means that I'm out of a job. As my brother so eloquently stated once, I look forward to the day when the diabetes blog is empty. "Dear Readers: I am no longer blogging about diabetes because I have been cured. Signed, Kerri." To have dozens of diabetes blogs collect dust because the disease has been cured? I can't imagine a better reason for a broken URL.

Dr. Genes: Until that day, Kerri Morrone will keep chronicling her progress at Six Until Me. Next week, she hosts [Grand Rounds](#), the weekly collection of the best in online medical writing, featuring posts submitted from doctors, nurses, students, healthcare professionals... and some remarkable patients.

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Disclosure: Nicholas Genes, MD, PhD, has disclosed no relevant financial relationships.
