

My Story:

From Misdiagnosed to Empowered

A Personal Introduction to the "Her Health" Advocacy Toolkit

I was twelve years old when my body suddenly stopped feeling like my own. It started with symptoms adults dismissed as "typical teenage drama": extreme fatigue, severe stomach pain, dizziness upon standing, chronic pain, and sensory overload. Deep down, I knew something was physically wrong.

When I reached out for help, I encountered a systemic failure known as the **Gender Pain Gap**, the documented pattern where physical symptoms reported by girls and women are routinely minimized or mislabeled. Instead of receiving thorough medical testing, I experienced **Diagnostic Overshadowing**. My physical illness was masked by a pre-existing psychiatric label. I was repeatedly told my body's breakdown was "just anxiety" or "depression," even as I insisted my physical pain was real.

I was prescribed psychiatric medication before anyone performed basic lab work to check if my body could tolerate it. Later, tests revealed I was severely anemic. As a result, the medication actually worsened my condition. Instead of being heard, I was blamed for my own declining health.

Over the next four years, I refused to let diagnostic overshadowing dictate my future. I refused to be the girl suffering from unexplained depression. I navigated a medical odyssey, consulting sixteen different specialists across neurology, gastroenterology, rheumatology, sleep medicine, and cardiology. In every waiting room, I had to fight to prove that my physical symptoms were not emotional artifacts.

Today, I have sixteen official physical diagnoses, including: POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome), Dysautonomia, Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS), Fibromyalgia, IBS-C, PMDD, Hyperhidrosis, Obstructive Sleep Apnea, severe Anemia, a blood clotting disorder, and ongoing evaluations for underlying autoimmune conditions. I am a veritable alphabet of issues.

My body was screaming, but the medical system is conditioned not to listen to young women. If I hadn't advocated relentlessly, I would still be trapped in a cycle of medical dismissal. I would still be taking medications for misdiagnosis.

That is why I created this toolkit. I want to replace diagnostic delays with data-driven self-advocacy. If you are facing symptoms no one understands, if a provider tells you "it's all in your head," or if you have ever doubted your own reality:

You are not dramatic. You are not exaggerating. You are not broken.

You are navigating a biased system, and you deserve accurate, evidence-based care. I am still healing, but I am no longer silent. And I am here to ensure you have the vocabulary, tools, and confidence to make your voice heard too.