

Message from the President

Schizophrenia is one of the most misunderstood diseases on earth. I used to think schizophrenia was one of the worst things that could happen to you in life, and that it was an untreatable, emotional disease. I did not know that schizophrenia medications heal brain tissue, and work to recalibrate neurotransmitters in the brain. I did not know that schizophrenia is very treatable.

In order to reach more people who have schizophrenia with a message of hope, and with tools they need, Dr. Henry Nasrallah and I founded the CURESZ Foundation. CURESZ stands for Comprehensive Understanding via Research and Education into Schizophrenia, and was established in



Bethany Yeiser, Author and Mental Health Advocate

“Living a high quality and productive life, despite schizophrenia, is a reality today.”

2016. Today, CURESZ provides people with schizophrenia and their families education, access to expert doctors who prescribe the medication clozapine, and stories of individuals who have reclaimed their lives from schizophrenia and moved on.

In our first newsletter, we interview Northeast Ohio Medical University clinician, Dr. Erik Messamore. Dr. Messamore is one of 79 doctors from around the U.S. and the world who are on the CURESZ Clozapine in Schizophrenia Experts Panel (CLOSZE)

and is available to consult with your own doctor about a trial of clozapine.

We also tell the story of Victoria Alonso’s remarkable recovery from schizophrenia, and the higher quality of life she is now enjoying after beginning the medication clozapine. Victoria is recognized by the CURESZ Foundation as one of our Schizophrenia Survivors.

Living a high quality and productive life, despite schizophrenia, is a reality today.

People struggling with schizophrenia should never give up until they have reached the highest level of symptom remission. The CURESZ Foundation wants to help you or your loved one overcome schizophrenia. We seek to offer hope to individuals who struggle with schizophrenia.

We invite you to help us shed light on schizophrenia.

Today, a schizophrenia diagnosis should not give rise to despair and hopelessness. Instead, we should see more success stories like mine.

We encourage you to visit CURESZ.org and to support our mission.

WhatSZ IN THIS EDITION

1st

Survivor Highlight:

Victoria Marie Alonso

Pg 2

Simple Ways to Improve Brain Health in 2018

Pg 2

An Interview with Dr. Erik Mesamore, MD, PhD

Pg 3

What’s New with CureSZ

Pg 4

Video Highlight: What are the Early Signs of Schizophrenia?

Pg 4

SCHIZOPHRENIA SURVIVORS



The Story of Victoria Marie Alonso



Victoria Marie Alonso, Author of *"My Personal Recovery from Schizophrenia"*

The onset of Victoria's schizophrenia was sudden. While attending a church service, a flood of confused and convoluted thoughts affected her mind. The experience shook her world.

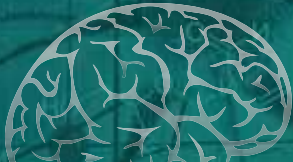
Subsequently, she became increasingly aware of erratic and illogical messages that compelled her to carry out certain tasks. While grocery shopping one afternoon, she was unable to ignore a mental command directing her to buy one of every spice in the store. She believed the message had come from God, and she spent over \$200 on spices.

Several weeks later, in 2008, Victoria consented to be evaluated by a psychiatrist at UCLA. She was

diagnosed with schizophrenia and began treatment with anti-psychotic medication. Risperdal enabled her to resist acting out delusional and compelling commands, and over a period of twelve months, the commands stopped completely. Victoria enrolled in college and completed a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in psychology from Brandman University, in 2012. From 2011 to 2015, she held professional positions in her field of study.

As time passed, Victoria again struggled with delusional beliefs such as believing herself to be the greatest person to have ever lived. However, through dedicated medication compliance, her insight and coping skills expanded to a level where she could better separate delusion from reality and not act upon commands. In 2017, when her medication was changed from Risperdal to Clozaril the delusions stopped completely.

Today, Victoria feels much more herself than ever before. She describes herself as a *"fighter,"* and is determined to never give up trying to live the best life possible with schizophrenia. She enjoys close relationships with her three children and husband of twenty-six years. She finds fulfillment in practicing her religion without the delusions. She is an author and maintains a blog about her recovery and her life, which she has reclaimed from schizophrenia.



SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR BRAIN HEALTH IN 2018

- Exercise on a regular basis.
- Eat right, including leafy vegetables, fruits, and antioxidants such as blueberries.
- Practice good sleep hygiene. Getting a full eight hours is healthy for your brain.
- Manage stress or avoid it.
- Keep good social support with friends and family.
- Stimulate the brain with new activities.
- Explore new hobbies, or take classes that are interesting to you.
- Travel to a place where you have never been. If you can't get away, check out a local beach or park.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

An Interview with

Dr. Erik Mesamore, MD, PhD

Part 1 of 4

Q Part of your work involves helping doctors use clozapine. What makes you so interested in this cause?

Clozapine saves lives and improves life quality in ways that other medications just can't. Clozapine is the best medication for about 20% of people with schizophrenia, yet in the United States it's used in just 4%. This means that about 16% of people with schizophrenia (almost half a million individuals) are denied the quality of life that can be realized with this unparalleled medication.

I was once working at a state hospital and became the doctor for a lady with schizophrenia. Let's call her "Anna." She had been continuously ill for about 20 years, bouncing between the hospital, the street, and sometimes the jail. As a homeless person with severe mental illness, she had experienced a number of really horrible traumas. Anna had never tried clozapine because: 1) doctors assumed that she would not take the medication regularly, or that her "lifestyle" was too chaotic to be able to show up for the weekly blood tests; and 2) she was very afraid of needles so would refuse the offer of clozapine anyway.

To address her fear of needles, I prescribed an anesthetic cream that we would rub into the spot where we would draw blood. The anesthetic cream to numb the skin helped Anna feel comfortable with blood testing and she agreed to try clozapine.

Within two months, we saw the real Anna. She was a delightful lady with a sense of humor. She was able, for the first time since becoming ill, to actively participate in her discharge planning.

She took her medication regularly because she felt that it really helped her. (The reason she would stop taking her prior medications is because they were not really helping in ways that mattered to her.) She went on to get her own apartment and began to create the kind of life she wanted. Clozapine helped her break the cycle of illness and homelessness and allowed Anna to reclaim a life in which she was in charge.

For a variety of reasons, many doctors in the United States don't offer clozapine to their patients with schizophrenia. Part of my work these days is to assist doctors or psychiatric nurse practitioners to use clozapine so that they can see for themselves that success stories like Anna's are actually very common with this uniquely effective medication.



Erik Messamore is a psychiatrist and associate professor of psychiatry at Northeast Ohio Medical University. He serves as the medical director of the University's Best Practices in Schizophrenia Treatment (BeST) Center. He holds both an MD and a PhD in pharmacology. Dr. Messamore serves on the CURESZ Clozapine in Schizophrenia Experts Panel (CLOSZE).



What's NEW

Video Series

CURESZ.org has recently released a seven part Schizophrenia Basics Video Series, featuring Robert McCullumsmith, MD, PhD. We also released a six part video series, called *"Research in Schizophrenia,"* featuring Henry Nasrallah, MD. Finally, Dr. Peirce Johnston and Bethany discuss schizophrenia in a 7-minute video *"Schizophrenia: A Treatable Biological Syndrome."*

Scholarly Articles

CURESZ.org also offers scholarly articles about schizophrenia including symptoms, medications for schizophrenia, and the road to recovery. Our article *"Treatment Issues to Discuss with Your Doctor"* provides the most relevant and important issues for you to discuss with your physician, with a simple checklist.

Clozapine

CURESZ also seeks to provide a trial of the under-utilized medication clozapine to more individuals. There are half a million disabled Americans who are eligible to receive clozapine, but in many cases, they have never even heard of it. Our Clozapine in Schizophrenia Experts Panel includes doctors from all over the United States, and the world.

VIDEO HIGHLIGHT

What are the Early Signs of Schizophrenia?

Part Two of Six



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW VIDEO](#)

Please use the enclosed card to donate to the CureSZ Foundation.

Your contribution will help patients, families, friends, those who work with the mentally ill, and the general public better understand this devastating illness, and know that there is hope today for recovery, and a return to a fulfilling and normal life.

The CURESZ Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
All contributions are tax deductible.

"We hope that our resources will lead to more success stories."