

Teresa C-M.

I was a special needs teacher and administrator with an upward career trajectory. I had a wide network of friends and professional colleagues. That all changed when I entered a grocery store and passed a child with chicken pox. That chance exposure gave me severe adult chicken pox which initiated an immune reaction that has left me severely debilitated for the last 26 years. That chance encounter changed my life. Dizziness, brain fog, exhaustion, and nausea define my life.

I was living in Alberta at the time and after doing some research, found a medical team who diagnosed me with ME, gave me counselling, support and medication that helped reduce some of the symptoms. I moved to BC, partly because it was felt I would do better at sea level. The first shock in moving here was that no one seemed to accept ME as a legitimate medical condition. One doctor yelled at me for seeking help while other wanted to refer me to a psychiatrist. Drugs that were routinely prescribed in Alberta were denied to me here. This was despite having received an official diagnosis of ME.

My GP in BC took me on because I said I would only come to him for non-ME related issues. I got into the CCDP at the Vancouver Women's hospital where they counsel but have no real treatment and certainly no cure. Then you cycle out of the program and left back where you started.

Before ME, I was looking forward to a successful fulfilling career and an active, exciting social life. Now my positive experience is feeling normal for about 10 minutes. It's happened twice in 26 years. The rest of my life is mainly housebound with the TV because even reading a simple book can only happen for brief periods of time. My friends have drifted away and even going to the nearby beach is rarely possible. That's my existence with ME.