

## CARING PARENTS TELL THEIR STORY

# Devoted to Giving Kids Their Life Back

by Lara Elborno

**I**n light of approaching Mother's and Father's Day, I have been thinking a lot about the unique, challenging and significant relationship between parents and their kids.

If everything is smooth in the journey of life, it is not easy to be a parent.

However, some parents are presented with more difficult challenges than others and having a sick child is certainly one of them. Chronic illnesses such as migraine and headaches, no doubt interfere with quality of life and the happiness of a growing child.

Dr. Suwan, is a Loyola trained board certified neurologist, and board certified pain specialist with extra certification in headache medicine, and has been treating patients for headaches and pain in the Naperville area. She believes that it is extremely important for parents to be attentive to their children's complaints, especially if kids are missing school because of pain or headache. "More subtle issues should be considered as well, such as poor school performance, inability to keep up with homework or a job, loss of appetite or sleeplessness." Dr Suwan said.

A kid's pain and headache inevitably becomes a family issue. When kids stay home from school, parents are supposed to stay with them or arrange for appropriate care. This is added to the significant concern of finding the right physician who will be able to find the source and manage the pain appropriately addressing all aspects of the problem. "Headache and pain conditions may be caused by variety of medical conditions that can be serious if left untreated" Dr Suwan said

The situation becomes complicated when one or both parents are suffering from disabling headaches as well. "Migraine, the most common disabling headache can be genetic and may affect more than one person in the family." Dr. Suwan said

10-15% of her patients are under 18 and she is very impressed by the caring nature of their parents.

It is important to highlight how challenging caring for a child with chronic pain and headaches is.

Olivia Aguilar a Chicago resident experienced all, with taking care of her grand daughter Gabrielle H. - a 16 year old cheerleader, and feels that sharing her story will help other parents and grand parents who have similar situations.

"For Gabrielle the onset of neck pain was instant and trauma related. Gabrielle fell in gymnastics" Olivia said "She called me up crying in pain" Olivia bought her grand daughter a cervical pillow and tried chiropractic management, message, warm packs, that provided temporary relief.

Gabrielle had to drop out cheerleading due to the pain and the increased risk of further injury. She switched to dance but continued to work through pain. "She didn't want to let her team mates down" Olivia said.

For Gabrielle her pain has been continuous with periods of relief, but it never goes entirely away and at times it flares up. Most recently when she went on vacation, it flared up and ruined her vacation. "I had thought it was getting better, but this told me it was not" Olivia said.

Olivia decided to seek further professional help and took her grand daughter to Dr. Elborno, the medical director of the pain management center of excellence at Hinsdale hospital and the associate of Dr Suwan at the Advanced Pain and Spine Physician Center. Olivia herself is a patient of Dr Elborno and she wanted to give her grand daughter the best



medical care with a specialist that she trusts.

"Again I began searching out medical help with someone who had helped me with similar pain". Olivia said "I am beginning to feel a sense of relief, for I now feel she will get the help she needs."

Wendy Weber and her son Jack of Joliet are both afflicted with migraines. Wendy is an entertainment editor at the Naperville SUN, and her son Jack is a funny, bright, spirited 4th grade child, who first started showing signs of migraines about two years ago. Wendy did not want to believe that this lifelong problem she

had was being passed on the next generation, but it was undeniable. "When I would ask Jack where he felt the headache he pointed at his temple, a telltale location of migraines," she said. At first Wendy took Jack to a chiropractor for adjustments and massage. "My husband was understandably reluctant to consider daily medicine for Jack - he was 8 at the time - so we tried alternatives first," she said. Finally, Jack was starting to get headaches more than twice a week, and taking a lot of Tylenol. He was missing school, time with friends, and the stress of having painful headaches was affecting his normally fun outlook on life.

Wendy and her husband could no longer hold back on considering daily medicine. She still remembers the many family activities she missed because of headaches, and the misery they caused her. One family vacation, she stayed back at the hotel, at her own insistence, as the rest of her family toured the Grand Canyon - all because of a migraine headache.

Wendy has been going to Dr. Suwan for about three years now, "Dr. Suwan is a wonderful, tenacious doctor. She has tried many methods to treat my severe migraines, and I knew Dr. Suwan would be able to help Jack", Wendy said.

At the first visit Dr. Suwan prescribed a very low dose of a daily medicine, as well as an onset medicine for when he got a migraine. "Being the caring doctor she is, Jack impressed Dr. Suwan with his polite nature and sweet disposition. It just shows what a wonderful person she is that she would comment on my son's personality," Wendy said. "Almost immediately, the headaches practically disappeared!" Jack is only 10, but he already sees the impact a good doctor can have on your life, which is a wonderful lesson for males to learn, as they are so often reluctant to see doctors.

"As a lifelong migraine sufferer, when I see someone else going through the problem, at any age, I recommend they seek treatment. Migraines can wreak havoc with your quality of life. It is the kind of problem that even affects your life when you don't have a headache, because you worry you may get one. Especially parents of young kids, if your children have headaches, take them to the doctor, even if you doubt they are that severe. I found out my son was hiding headaches from me, and I am very diligent about his headaches. Kids just don't want to have to stop and miss out on things - but the good news is, with proper care, they don't have to miss anything."

Dr Suwan is very proud of her patients and their parents and she believes that with all the advances in medical science, headache and pain are not supposed to interfere with quality of life.

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