



Ryan Puckett
2013 Jingle Bell Run Walk Honoree
Indianapolis, Indiana

Ryan Puckett first noticed the pain in 2007 after a weekend playing bocce ball in the backyard.

"How do you get injured playing bocce ball?" Ryan asked puzzlingly. He would eventually be diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis at age 35.

At first he felt a pain in his left oblique and he had trouble turning from one side to another in bed. Then he tightened up on the left side of his neck and began to experience cramping in his mid-back. "I felt like I had been in a car accident and I just couldn't loosen up," explains the 40-year-old.

Thinking he must be injured in some way, Ryan went to a sports medicine doctor who prescribed physical therapy, but that offered little relief. Soon, Ryan began to notice swelling in his right index finger and knuckle and a little inflammation in his left index finger near the fingernail, which was also beginning to flip upward.

By day, Ryan is constantly working on a keyboard as a marketing communications consultant. In his leisure time, Ryan plays acoustic guitar and sings. Having pain in his fingers just wouldn't do.

After some blood tests, Ryan was referred to a rheumatologist. The doctor gave him a pamphlet on psoriatic arthritis, prescribed some anti-inflammatory medicine and told him to come back in a month. "I was very discouraged at that point. I started reading about psoriatic arthritis on the Internet and started to panic. The worst-case scenarios are pretty grim and I feared the worst. But the good news was that we had caught this very early and treatment could help/prevent the worst from happening."

Ryan decided to look for natural solutions as well. His next stop was an osteopath who recommended some supplements in addition to a gluten-free and nearly dairy-free diet. The osteopath also tried cupping to reduce inflammation in problem areas. His doctor recommended avoiding sugar, alcohol, soda, and coffee too.

"My first thought was, "what about pie?!?" recalls Ryan as Thanksgiving was approaching.

Upon his follow-up with the rheumatologist, the specialist dismissed the naturopathic strategies, put Ryan through a few more tests and eventually suggested the pain was all in Ryan's head.

"Since the naturopathic approaches only treat the symptoms of my disease, I needed a new rheumatologist and found a good one in Dr. Elizabeth Le. She was attentive, did a thorough exam, ran more tests and soon confirmed that I had psoriatic arthritis."

Dr. Le stepped things up by prescribing the disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD) Methotrexate with folic acid to prevent side effects. This treatment took effect within a few weeks, and combined with naturopathic tactics and getting back to regular exercise (especially swimming); Ryan began to feel pretty normal.

This year, Ryan felt well enough to train for the 500 Festival's Mini-marathon. He still tries to swim as much as possible and practices yoga once a week. He's able to play guitar without a problem.

"I'm so grateful that my arthritis is being managed successfully, but I fear there will come a day that it won't work anymore," says Ryan. But his bigger concern is that his son will one day suffer from this disease. "When I was young, my dad and I played lots of basketball in the driveway and jogged around the neighborhood together. I don't want my son's life to be limited by arthritis and I don't want my arthritis to prohibit me from sharing similar experiences with him."

The Arthritis Foundation is proud to have Ryan Puckett as the 2013 Jingle Bell Run/Walk Honoree.

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation (www.arthritis.org) is committed to raising awareness and reducing the unacceptable impact of arthritis, which strikes one in every five adults and 300,000 children, and is the nation's leading cause of disability. To conquer this painful, debilitating disease, we support education, research, advocacy and other vital programs and services.