



Tom's Story

Mastering the Mysterious Science of Fibromyalgia

I was in college in 1969 when hit with “a viral infection of some kind.” Internal body temperatures went through the roof. Luckily, I was near a hospital where I was placed in an ice bath to lower my core temperature. Yet, over the next few weeks, my muscles tightened up to a point where I couldn't move at all. Even the muscles around the optic nerve pinched it off, causing blindness for about a week. Neither Tufts Medical Center nor Massachusetts General Hospital was able to determine the cause of my condition.

Slowly, things improved. However, it took about a year or so before I could climb a flight of stairs without significant pain and the need to sleep many hours. When I got tired or stressed, my neck muscles stiffened and my eyes became very sensitive to light. I'd have to lay down in a dark room in order for them to return to normal. Even today when I get really tired, my neck tightens and my light sensitivity returns, causing me again to lie down in the dark. The pain never went away but spread from my legs and neck areas to the rest of my body over the following years. Everywhere except my ear lobes, that is (a little fibro humor).

After graduating college, I taught high school chemistry for a few years before starting my career as an analytical chemist in the field of liquid chromatography. I then went into the sales side of the business which required a fair amount of travel. A dozen years later my job changed again, requiring me to relocate from Rochester, NH to the Boston, MA area. The relocation took time and I had to commute about 450 miles each way for 9 months. Getting out of the car at the end of the drive was tougher each week. My leg muscles were so tight that it took several minutes to get out and the pain was almost unbearable.



Finally, I went to a doctor who diagnosed me with fibromyalgia (FM). This was in the very late 1970s so fibromyalgia was not as well-known as today and, being a male, that was even more unusual.

The increase in overall pain came slowly over time. The progression eventually caused major problems with my sleep quality or, rather, the lack of it. In a way, it helped me to do a very demanding job. Driving 500 miles or more after a full day doing my job or spending hours doing “paperwork” was not an issue since I couldn't really sleep anyway. I remember completing a full day of work in central NJ and getting in the car to drive overnight to the Minneapolis, MN area for another demo the following morning.

For the longest time, getting only a few hours' sleep after a long day seemed to be okay. Typically, I would get an hour or two of sleep before the pain of pressure points caused me to wake and get up. Then I'd stay up for a while before attempting to sleep again. I didn't realize that I was not getting the restorative, REM sleep needed for the body to regenerate itself.



I started to attend yearly fibromyalgia conferences held in Ohio to learn how to handle my FM. At one of the dinner presentations, I was rubbing my thighs to try to relieve my leg pain. A fellow sufferer sitting next to me noticed and offered me a packet of her grape seed extract to take later. Being in science, I really didn't believe herbal medicines to be better than the snake oil sold in the Wild West a century before. That was until I was in my hotel room lying in bed, exhausted from rubbing my thighs, pain so great I had tears in my eyes, and praying for relief.

With no other idea as to what to do, I dissolved the extract powder in water and drank it down. And then, it happened. I felt something spread throughout my body, similar to being injected with dye for an x-ray test. The feeling was actually no feeling! My body stopped aching. For the first time in years, I didn't have pain! The next morning, I searched in vain for the angel that gave me that first dose of extract to thank her for giving me relief.

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Mark Pellegrino M.D. was the speaker that prior evening and I did find him. He explained in all likelihood the pain didn't disappear but rather was reduced to a degree that it felt like it was gone. Perhaps my body was "starving" for something in the extract that provided relief. He also suggested the pain may return but to try other herbal medicines in my search, too. Dr. Pellegrino cautioned that one of the toughest parts of living with FM is that relief is "personal". What "worked" for me might not help someone else and what didn't "work" for someone else may in fact help me. In other words, there is no silver bullet and relief would take experimentation over time. He suggested that I get in touch with Margy and David because TyH offers so many products that may help. I did find both of you and the rest, as they say, is history.

I started taking TyH's grape seed extract and Fibro-Care™ in 1997. The scientist in me though had to determine if they were actually the cause of my feeling better. So in true scientific fashion, I'd stop one of them for a few months, start it again and repeat the on/off process over a year or so. Then I switched to do the same cycle with the other one. What I found was both have a positive effect but in different ways.



Fibro-Care™ seems to keep my muscles (especially my leg muscles) from getting/feeling hard to the touch similar to the tightness muscles get when doing isometric exercises. If I stop taking it for more than a month, the hardness comes back. Starting it up again takes a few weeks before the hardness and tightness is relieved.

The grape seed extract helps normalize the spikes in pain level, lowering it overall. I don't get super sensitive to touch/pressure/pain while taking it. Like the Fibro-Care™, if I stop it, even for one week, the pain becomes sharper and I experience shooting pain within my muscles body-wide. Since my legs have always seemed worse than any other part of my body, the spikes were especially painful there.



Then, another job change – this time with a bigger territory and 120,000 yearly mileage. Within 5 years my pain level was so high and my sleep pretty much shot that my doctor said I had to stop working. Permanently. I was lucky as I was covered by disability insurance and met the requirements for being totally disabled. That and finding doctors who understood FM is real and not something made up or only in my mind. Without the pressures of work and the stress of financial problems to contend with, I eventually become very comfortable. That is, as long as

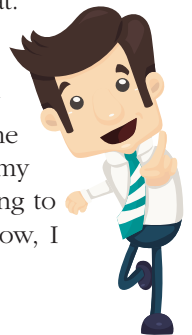
I am faithful in taking my regimen of supplements, some herbals and some prescriptions. The present cocktail seems to work.

Currently I take 2 Fibro-Care™ and 1 grape seed extract twice a day. I do take pain medication but have been able to reduce the type and amounts (partly reduced to manage the side effects at higher levels being worse than the pain).

One more incident – funny in a fibro sort of way – was when my leg pain became so bad a few years ago that I was pretty much limited to an electric cart to get around. I wondered if my future would be structured around a wheelchair. However, when I finally saw an orthopedic surgeon, he wasn't sure how I was able to walk at all. My x-rays showed bone on bone. He inquired why the pain didn't tell me the joints were gone. I just assumed my fibro was making my knee pain worse over time. I hope people with FM who read this part of my story realize that there are many other reasons for pain other than fibro. In my case, knee replacement surgery reduced the leg pain to near zero!

Gaining the ability to walk is changing my quality of life. I have lost weight (down 35 pounds from my all-time high of 306) and am gaining muscle strength again. My hope is that my increased level of activity will mean my pain meds will eventually go away. I'm sure I'm not alone in saying that most every drug has the side effects of weight gain and constipation. Now that I can move I feel great.

Finally, I have started taking CoQ10 a few months ago and do notice an uptick in my energy level. Thanks again for having the products available to us. I don't know if my story will be of help to others but after having to deal with fibromyalgia for about 50 years now, I actually feel quite good!



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Tom now lives in NH with his wife of nearly 44 years and his English Setter, Lulu. Both children are grown now and seem to experience mild fibromyalgia symptoms. Retirement allows him to enjoy his many hobbies which include: fly tying and fishing; woodworking; pistol and rifle shooting; skeet; upland game hunting with his dog and photography. Oh yeah, computers fill another niche. Tom teaches a section or two of remedial math at the local community college each semester. Any extra time is spent at the movies. Tom is anxiously awaiting his wife's retirement in another few years.

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