



spotlight on health

CRPS: What Everyone Should Know

(NAPSA)—An estimated 1.2 to 2.6 million Americans suffer from Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome (RSDS) or Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS), but many are not correctly diagnosed early enough for treatments to make an immediate difference.

RSDS/CRPS is an underdiagnosed, undertreated nerve condition that causes intense and chronic pain. It is usually caused by a trauma injury, but the pain not only stays with the patient long after the injury has healed, but continues to get worse. If not caught within the early stages of the disease—the first few months—RSDS/CRPS usually ends up being a lifelong condition.

Patients with RSDS/CRPS suffer severe, burning pain, changes in skin and bone, tissue swelling and extreme sensitivity to touch—and it can be much worse than people might imagine. For Wilson Hulley, a member of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, it began with a broken foot.

"When I was first diagnosed [with RSDS/CRPS], I met with a neurologist in Baltimore who told me he could help me for two years and then I would probably commit suicide like the majority of his other RSDS/CRPS patients," he said.

Hulley's experiences are not unusual among RSDS/CRPS sufferers. A recent survey conducted by the Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association (RSDSA) discovered that:

- Nearly 19 percent of patients experienced their first symptom after a bone fracture;



Wilson Hulley suffers from a chronic, painful condition called RSDS/CRPS. His guide dog, Star, assists him.

- 15 percent experienced initial symptoms after a sprain;
- 14 percent reported RSDS/CRPS resulting from a "crush" injury; and
- 12 percent indicated their symptoms began after a simple contusion.

The survey also found that 75 percent reported that their employment had to be changed because of the condition; that most are involved with Workers' Compensation and disability as a result of RSDS/CRPS; and that more than half had considered suicide at one time or another.

The RSDSA is working to educate people about the condition and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. To learn more, visit www.rsd.org or call (877) 662-7737.