

# SEE YOUR DOCTOR

## Hope And Determination: One Woman's Fight With Carcinoid Syndrome

(NAPSA)—Fatigue, diarrhea and stomachaches are among symptoms that people frequently associate with bad food, stress or a temporary bug. But for some, these common symptoms may be signs of a more severe gastrointestinal condition that may result in serious clinical consequences.

The signs were subtle for Carol-Anne Wilson, a graphic designer and mother of five, who was diagnosed with carcinoid syndrome three years ago. Prior to her diagnosis, she experienced spontaneous and uncontrollable flushing. Her doctor reassured her that she was just having premenopausal symptoms, and Wilson continued to endure the episodes of flushing.

However, with time, she started experiencing extreme fatigue and frequent diarrhea. "There were days and weeks where I couldn't function without taking naps because I was so tired," she says. One summer night, a few years after Wilson first started experiencing symptoms, she was rushed to the emergency room for severe abdominal pain. Initially, the doctors suspected appendicitis or gall bladder problems, but a radiology exam revealed that she had tumors throughout the liver. Further tests confirmed a large carcinoid tumor in her ascending colon that was close to obstruction.

### About Carcinoid Syndrome

Carcinoid syndrome is a cluster of symptoms such as fatigue, severe flushing and diarrhea and results from a slow-growing tumor usually in the gastrointestinal tract, occasionally in the bronchial tubes and the rectum, and less often from the pancreas. The small intestines are the most common



**Once they had a proper diagnosis, Carol-Anne Wilson and her doctors were able to fight back against carcinoid syndrome.**

target for carcinoid formation, but slow tumor growth and lack of initial symptoms can make the disease especially hard to diagnose.

Signs of carcinoid syndrome are very similar to other gastrointestinal disorders, but the severity and frequency varies among patients. Symptoms include debilitating diarrhea, intermittent abdominal pain, change in bowel habits, asthma-like wheezing attacks and red flushing of the face.

"Carol-Anne's case centers around the necessity for early recognition," said her current doctor, Lowell Anthony, M.D., associate professor of medicine, Louisiana State University Medical Center. "The biggest barrier to diagnosis is the lack of considering carcinoid syndrome as the potential problem, and physicians need to be more aware of the signs and symptoms so that early recognition and disease control becomes a reality."

### Diagnosis and Treatment

Once suspected, carcinoid

syndrome is relatively easy to confirm with a blood or urine test. The overall goal of treatment is tumor removal, but the success rate depends on size, location, and growth of the tumor. Removing or destroying large portions of the tumor often effectively decreases the amount of harmful hormones being produced and circulated in the body and relieves symptoms. Sometimes, surgery alone can remove all tumor tissue, but if surgical removal is not an option or does not completely eliminate the tumor, physicians may choose other treatments.

For Wilson, a hemicolectomy surgery successfully removed the carcinoid tumor in her colon, but she still had bursts of tumors on her liver and experienced symptoms of flushing and fatigue. She sought help from carcinoid experts across the globe and eventually met with Dr. Anthony. He treated her symptoms with a prescription medical therapy, which quickly improved her condition. "I felt a tremendous level of improvement," said Carol-Anne who no longer suffers from flushing or diarrhea. "You can never live without hope."

Wilson is just one of many Americans battling with this often overlooked disease that affects men and women alike. According to the Carcinoid Cancer Foundation (CCF), a non-profit organization chartered by the State of New York, 20 to 40 new clinically significant carcinoid cases are diagnosed each year per one million individuals in the general U.S. population. For more information about carcinoid syndrome, visit the CCF Web site at [www.carcinoid.org](http://www.carcinoid.org).