

End PJ Paralysis Patient Story

“In December 2018, I was hospitalized for two weeks. As an active patient and family advisor within AHS, I was aware of a relatively new initiative called End PJ Paralysis. Although this was not yet common practice on the unit I was on, I had read the research on the project and was intrigued by it. I made up my mind to self-test this.

My daughter brought in two t-shirts and two pairs of leggings for me and took them home every few days for washing. I spent nights in the hospital gown, as I found it was easier and I didn't want to create too much laundry for my daughter. Each day when I felt ready, usually by around 11 a.m. at the latest, I would get up, get dressed and get moving.

I have to admit that it did feel good to be in my own clothes. It was clear to the unit staff that I was a patient as I had a hospital band on and was pushing an IV pole with me on my walks.

I typically got out of bed every few hours and took a walk, not a long walk mind you, but I was moving and not continually laying in my bed. I made this a daily practice.

During my stay, there were two days that I was not able to get dressed. I call these my 'mental health' days. I was struggling with the events of my stay which had become much longer than I anticipated and I was discouraged and upset. I didn't have the energy on those particular days to get dressed and that was OK. I recognized it for what it was and I gave myself permission to honour my state of mind and stay curled up in bed. I still managed to take walks those days but I did not feel up to getting dressed.

I noticed the most extreme benefits of End PJ Paralysis was on my discharge date, which was December 23, two days before Christmas. I was determined not to stay in the hospital over Christmas and even if I was not completely 100 per cent better, I would be home to celebrate the season with my family. My daughter noticed a huge change in comparison to my other hospital stays (of which there have been many). She said, 'Mom, you weren't grumpy. You were easier to deal with!'

When we went to my cousin's house for Christmas dinner, my aunt remarked that she could not believe that I had just spent two weeks in the hospital. She said I looked just great!

The most remarkable difference for me was how quickly I was able to get back to my regular activities and routine. I have a complex health history and have had many hospitalizations over the last twenty-three years. It typically takes me twice as long to get back on my feet as the length of time my hospital stay has been. Normally, if I had been hospitalized for two weeks, it would have taken me approximately four weeks to get back to my regular normal activity level.

After this hospital stay, I was pretty much back to my regular activity after three weeks, knocking a full week off my recovery time.

The fact that my state of mind and mental well-being had also changed for the better according to my family was of huge benefit. Although I never like to think of the next hospital stay, I know that it is inevitable and I will definitely be getting up, getting dressed and moving!”