

**PATIENT APPRECIATION AWARD**  
**February 11, 2007**

Dear Dr. Friedman,

Please accept this award in appreciation for all you do for your patients. We are so fortunate to know that not only is our doctor a brilliant researcher and esteemed physician, but he is also an exceptionally kind and compassionate man.

As a small token of our affection, we would like to send you and your family on a weekend trip of your choosing. To this end, please expect a package to arrive to your Drew University address next week with a certified check in the amount of \$1,000.00. We'd thought of Disneyland, or perhaps a trip to the desert, or a drive up the coast -- but ultimately, we decided the best trip would be one that you and your family choose to suit your own tastes! We hope you will enjoy a wonderful weekend of relaxation and fun with your family. You so deserve it!

Also, as a condolence for your recent loss, we are arranging for a local nursery to deliver to you a tree of your choosing to be planted as a memorial. Details about how to contact the nursery will come with the package next week.

Finally, these letters below were written by some of us who wanted to remind you how important your work is - and you are! - to our lives. We hope you will catch a glimpse of the deep appreciation, affection, and respect we all feel for our beloved doctor.

Sincerely,

Your patients who love you

Dear Dr. Friedman,

I wanted to write this letter to show my heartfelt appreciation for all of the hard work you have done for me and rest of your patients over the years.

I first came to see you when my life seemed to be falling apart around me. Everything I thought I was and was going to become had come crumbling down. I had recently graduated from the University of Colorado with a BA in Psychology. I started my first “grown-up” job as the Youth Advocate for a domestic abuse shelter in the Florida Keys. My dream was to get some work experience and then return to academia to begin a doctoral program in Child Psychology. Soon after I started my new job in paradise, I started gaining weight. At first I attributed this to the stresses accompanying my new job. But very quickly a 15lb. weight gained turned into almost 100lbs. My family, upon visiting me for the holidays, was in total shock about the changes that had happened to me in just a few short months. I felt ashamed and embarrassed.

Along with the extreme weight gain came missed periods, depression, and social isolation. It seemed like something was terribly wrong and I went to several local doctors who were very disinterested in the problems I was facing. Out of desperation, I turned to the Internet to research the symptoms I was dealing with. I stumbled upon a website called Cushings-Help.com. I was astonished to realize that there was this huge group of people that had all of the same symptoms. Many of them were talking about this wonderful doctor in Los Angeles and how he was the only one able to help them. They called you the “wizard” and suggested that I follow the yellow brick road all of the way from Florida to California to your office on Wilshire Blvd. I must admit that I was quite hesitant at first and couldn’t understand why all of these people were traveling across the country to see you, but I decided that it was worth taking that chance for my health. I was so glad that I did!

From the moment that I walked into your office you were certain that I had Cushing’s. You showed confidence in me, and all of the problems that I was expressing, when other doctors and even my own family had not. You took the time to listen to me and took on the challenge of helping me figure out what was happening. Your kindness, skill, and wisdom during this difficult point in my life has meant the world to me. Since my surgery in September, I have been feeling better. Although I know that it I still have a long road ahead, it is reassuring to know that I have a capable and caring doctor to work with me throughout this journey towards recovery.

You have shown unending patience and compassion for patients with very complicated problems. You have given up your weekends and family time for emails, phone appointments, and emergency calls. You have displayed great courage by challenging the conventional wisdom about this disease. Your efforts have been tireless in taking on patients, teaching, and advancing research in the field.

May you be blessed for your dedication to helping me and other Cushing’s patients across the country.

Sincerely, A Patient

February 10, 2007

Dear Dr. Friedman,

I am so sorry to hear about your loss. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family during this difficult time. There are no words I can say to make your grief disappear, but may you find peace in the happy memories you keep of your loved one.

Many of your devoted patients thought it would be a nice gesture to share some of our gratitude and appreciation of your devotion to patients with Cushing's. After my first appointment with you just a few weeks ago, I felt like someone was finally looking at the whole picture, not just each separate problem, which I know are undoubtedly tied together. When you asked me why I came to see you and I told you to see if I had Cushing's, I felt like for the first time, a physician believed in the possibility, and was truly willing to do whatever it takes to confirm a diagnosis. Even though, we have had only one meeting, I feel I have hope again and am looking forward to a future without being ill. So far, that has been your gift to me.

Now, it is time to return my appreciation to your willingness to commit to each patient you evaluate. I hope you will accept this gift from those of us who appreciate your willingness to help us when others have failed. I look forward now to finding a solution, and am ready to fight the battle with your help and guidance.

My deepest sympathy,

**Larissa L. Coyle**

Larissa Coyle  
Your first patient from West Virginia!

Dear Dr. Friedman,

Thank you for all you do. Thank you especially for listening to me, believing me and checking everything to get to the bottom of things. I am so glad you are my doctor because I know I am in good hands!

Love,

Sally Taft

Dear Dr. Friedman,

I hardly know where to begin this letter as there is much to say, and I know words cannot suffice when it comes to saying thank you for what you have done for me.

As you may recall, back when I was a healthy college student, I was an avid runner. In 1991, when I suddenly gained 50 pounds in two months (and 110 in a year), and my menses disappeared altogether, I had to stop running. I wish so much I had met you then. If I had, I would not have lost the last 16 years of my life to Cushing's Disease, to years of doctors dismissing me, telling me that I am fat and depressed and putting me on diets to which I strictly adhered but inevitably failed, to years of feeling like a hypochondriac - yet, knowing in a deep place that there was something terribly wrong with me, if only someone could put a name to it and take me seriously....

As you can imagine, Cushing's has impacted on all of my relationships. My family never knew what to think as I continued to gain weight despite not changing my diet. I guess they thought I was a closet binge-eater, which put me at war with food as much as I was at war with my body. My husband has never known me without this disease or seen my face without the effects of steroid puffiness; he has never known the consistently sweet, southern gentlewoman I am underneath the cortisol surges, which we now know have impacted on my emotions and cognitive functions for years. Finally having a diagnosis has put me in a new light in their eyes and restored me to them. Years of isolation have melted away as my family and husband now understand that I have been fighting a silent battle against a formidable disease. Years of self-doubt and disassociation with my rebellious body have been replaced by a profound sense of validation and a reconnection with my perception of self, the likes of which I have not felt since I used to run.

When I landed last August at a real endocrinologist's office (versus the reproductive endocrinologist who had been "treating" me for PCO for seven years), the best thing he did when he suspected Cushing's was to tell me, "Go find an expert." And so I did my research carefully -- every instinct told me that you were going to be able to help me, that you were the best of the best when it comes to this terrible disease. And so the spark of hope ignited....

That hope was realized when I met you and found that, instead of dismissing me, you actually listened! Instead of treating symptoms, you searched for causes. Instead of telling me "Cushing's is too rare," you had the wisdom to test aggressively - unlike more conservative endocrinologists, who, sadly, find efficacy in an arbitrary "waiting period" of three to six months between tests. Instead of being talked down to, I found someone who treats me like a partner in my healthcare, as if I have some level of intelligence and a vested interest in the outcome (which I do!) Thank you for being unlike any doctor I have ever seen (and I've seen a lot) in these regards.

It has only been six months since I heard the word "Cushing's", and I am on the other side of surgery. For someone with an episodic case, this is remarkable - and entirely because of your pioneering approach to the diagnostic process, which quests for answers. Thank you for your willingness to suffer tirelessly against the more conservative tide as you further your vital and groundbreaking research.

I hope you will receive our tokens of appreciation as confirmation of the good you have worked in our lives. We never forget that you are, at heart, a researcher and that you elect to take on a medical practice, which gives us access to the very best of care. We are also aware of the personal sacrifices you make to do so, and so we wanted to tell you how very much we appreciate all that you do for us.

In an ideal world, all doctors would see their patients as a whole; treat systems rather than symptoms; engage rather than direct; be willing to buck convention in a search for answers rather than defaulting to the common consensus. In an ideal world, all doctors would have your inquisitive spirit and unshakable courage to press forward in advocacy for your patients' health. You are a gem among them all, Dr. Friedman. It is an honor to call you my doctor and even more so to call you my friend. Though it is still soon after surgery, I will continue to have hope no matter what lies ahead because I know you are on

my side. Dr. Friedman, you are my hero - because you are running my *true* marathon with me.

Thank you. Thank you. I will never be able to say it enough.

With deep gratitude and great respect,

Kate Myers