

AW's story of suffering from undiagnosed endometriosis

April 13, 1998

To Ceana Nezhat, M.D.

Please forgive me, because this letter is long overdue. It is with heartfelt gratitude that I write to you in appreciation for having my life back. If any of your patients should have any doubts about having laparoscopic surgery by you, please show them this letter.

I had a total hysterectomy in August of 1995. I never felt better after that surgery. In fact, day by day, I kept feeling worse. I was tired, but could not sleep. I had a constant vaginal yeast infection from the inception of the surgery. I tried everything to get rid of it, nothing worked. I had trouble with constipation. My hair, which was beautiful, long and thick, started falling out, and what didn't fall out was limp, totally dull and lifeless.

Every time I would talk to my gynecologist he would tell me that my hormones were not right so new hormones would be ordered. My eyes were dry. My vagina was constantly dry. I had absolutely no sex drive.

In fact, I had no drive for anything. I was constantly depressed, had lost almost 40 pounds and looked like a skeleton. I had a very good, but high stress job. I was going to paralegal school. I had to drop that. I was afraid of losing my job because, although I tried hard to focus, I was constantly worried about my health and being a single mother I was afraid I'd die and my daughter would be alone.

I went to a variety of doctors. I started with my gynecologist. No help. I then went to various alternative medicine doctors, because I had developed a yeast infection in my intestines and could not digest food properly. This too seemed to be of no help.

Then, with the help of some relatives, I went to the Mayo Clinic. I went there looking and feeling absolutely horrible. I had all kinds of tests run and saw both their gynecologists and gastroenterologists. They told me after about a week of testing that "I had nothing wrong with me and that I should go home and see a psychiatrist."

I was devastated.

I had spent more than \$25,000 in two years (out of pocket) to help myself. I was not only sick, but going bankrupt.

I started to develop chemical sensitivities. Dust bothered me. I could not stand to be near dry cleaning solution. I gave away all my clothes and got new ones that could be washed. I had to move myself away from the printer by the computer at work because I wouldn't stand the smell. Perfume bothered me. Smoke bothered me. I was becoming a hermit. I had no life, I felt like the living dead.

About the spring of 1997 I started to go to Dr. Bernard Mlaver, an allergist in Dunwoody. Dr. Mlaver put me on a yeast-free, sugar-free diet, supplements and allergy shots. I started feeling

somewhat better, but the yeast infection persisted and I also started having terrible pains in the spot where my ovaries were. Dr. Mlaver would always tell me that I wouldn't get better until my hormones were straightened out, and that he thought I was full of endometriosis. How could that be, I thought, I've had a complete hysterectomy.

He told me to go and see his friend, Dr. Nezhat. I'll admit I was skeptical at first. I thought, yeah, sure, he's got a buddy and he wants to give him some business. I avoided going to Dr. Nezhat. Until I felt really, really bad. The pain was so excruciating that I couldn't bend over. I had Dr. Mlaver's staff make me an appointment with you, Dr. Nezhat.

The minute I walked into your office I knew you were going to be special. Everyone in your office was totally professional and extremely nice. Audrey and Mary Ann treated me very warmly. I really liked you. You seemed genuinely interested in my well-being. I waited awhile before having surgery because my insurance was not going to cover much. Your office helped me solve that problem.

I was very apprehensive the day I went into surgery. I thought "what if I come out of surgery and Dr. Nezhat tells me that nothing is wrong with me?" Then I'll know I'm just plain crazy. I had such a bad time after the hysterectomy [via laparotomy] that I thought I'd be really ill after the laparoscopy.

Oh, contraire. I literally felt better right after regaining consciousness in the recovery room.

I found out the next morning that you had found that I was literally covered with endometriosis on the inside. I couldn't believe it. I had a complete hysterectomy. That shouldn't have happened.

You also gave me a video to watch so that I could see for myself how my ureters were encased in it (that's why I had so much pain). You also said that if I didn't have the surgery at the time that I did that I would have had kidney failure. My bladder was embedded in it. My rectum was almost bent in two. What a mess! You lasered this all and fixed me up.

Every day I seem to be getting stronger and feel much better. I am so happy that you actually found something wrong with me and that I wasn't crazy. The hormone implants have been working quite well. I actually feel alive, can sleep better and have a sex drive. The constipation is gone also. And my hair is looking lively and healthy.

Dr. Nezhat, thank you for persevering and believing in me. I will always be eternally grateful to you. If any of your patients ever doubt your ability as the greatest surgeon for women in Atlanta, please give her my phone number. I am your number one fan.

Sincerely,

A.W., Atlanta