

Video Transcript: A Patient's Perspective with Nurse Angela and Loree

Angela: Hi, my name is Angela. I'm a tuberculosis nurse in the Northern District of the state of Alabama. I'm here today to discuss tuberculosis and symptoms, outcomes, and a personal patient experience. This is a patient of ours. Her name is Miss Loree. And so I would just like to ask her a few questions on what her experience was with tuberculosis and go from the beginning to end on how she felt about her experience with the Alabama Department of Public Health Tuberculosis Program. So, Loree, thank you for helping us out today.

Loree: Thank you for having me.

Angela: Good. And we're very glad that she's here and she's feeling well and we're excited about that. So thank you so much for helping us with this. So just to help people kind of give them a little insight on what your experience was. Can you tell us a little bit about what your symptoms were and maybe when they started?

Loree: Yes, I started my first symptom which I did not know was TB related at all was pain in my left shoulder blade. And it felt very muscular. So, I had no idea that it was my lung that was actually being affected. And that went on for probably three or four months before I started having lung pain. And then I went to the ER to work. I'm a nurse. I've been a nurse for 20 years. Went to work, told them, "I need to be seen. I'm having lung pain." And was misdiagnosed with pneumonia.

Angela: Okay. All right. So, what were your main concerns when you were actually diagnosed with tuberculosis? When you realized that was your diagnosis, what were the main concerns you might have had?

Loree: Well, the number one concern is am I going to die? Because when I found out that I had tuberculosis, I had had it for at least a year that I know of. And my second concern was, am I going to be able to work? Am I going to get so sick that I can't work at all? Because by that time, I was working from home. But, as you know, TB destroys your body. And I had already gotten down so skinny. I weighed 115 pounds. Having night sweats. Would wake up drenched and you know you start to wonder at what point is this going to kill me. So those were my two main concerns was am I going to die and my financial situation.

Angela: Sure. And those are some of the major concerns with tuberculosis and sometimes brings up the fear and why people won't get tested. They have the concerns of the stigmatism that comes with tuberculosis as well as will I be able to work will I be able to continue. So we understand those concerns we like to address those concerns and obviously the fears that come with it, health related of how far because the disease progression can be so scary. So before you were referred to the Alabama Department of Public Health, can you tell people a little bit

about what the steps were to get you from your primary care physician to Alabama Department of Public Health?

Loree: Yes. I went in for a bronchoscopy and was notified the day after the bronchoscopy that there was suspicion that my test was going to come back as tuberculosis. And a couple of days later, I went to the ER because of my symptoms had worsened. I was very, very sick. And once I got hospitalized, they told me that the state would be taking over and that you guys would be contacting me. And actually, they would not let me leave the hospital until I had gotten in contact with the state.

Angela: So at that point generally what would happen if a primary care physician um hospitals were to come to the realization that they're dealing with tuberculosis active disease they will contact the Alabama Department of Public Health at that time we take over the care of the patient and we want we do screenings further testing during the process of a definitive diagnosis there would be several tests that are done. Perhaps your primary care doctor, perhaps the hospital at some point in time, that's when we would take over then and we take over the medications and any other testing or medications related to tuberculosis. These services are free of charge through the Alabama Department of Public Health. Although we don't necessarily take care of comorbidities, diabetes, cancers, things like that. Those are conditions that can worsen tuberculosis. So, we would definitely want you to follow up with your primary for that. But the Alabama Department of Public Health does take care of services related to tuberculosis free of charge. So, how would you say that your how would you say the outcome of your treatment was? What was your experience with your treatment through ADPH?

Loree: It was wonderful. You were my TB nurse and you were there for me every day. They will come to your home. They will give you your medications and again it is free of charge. It was wonderful. I did not have any side effects from my medications and there is it's really simple. You just have to be there, take your medicine, and then after you build a relationship and trust with your nurse, they often will let you take your medicine using an app where you record yourself and that way they don't have to come out every day and you just take your medicine and it's videoed. And it was wonderful because it is a wonderful service. It is free of charge and without the medicine you will die. It is a certainty. You cannot get well from this disease otherwise.

Angela: That's true. Tuberculosis is very receptive to the tuberculosis medications. It is completely treatable and curable but it also can cause severe illness as well as death. So how do you feel now completing your treatment compared to six months ago?

Loree: Oh wonderful. Wonderful. I feel very good. Um, and I am so glad that I, you know, finished my treatment. And it's so important to do everything that they say. If you do that, you will get well. It's a long road, but you will get well.

Angela: That's true. Patient compliance can really go a long way. And as long as we can work as a team, we can treat TB disease, we can cure TB disease, and we just want what's best for the patients. And Alabama

Department of Public Health would just like to inform the public of what our services are. And we want anybody that feels they've been in contact with an active tuberculosis patient, they have the symptoms of active tuberculosis, unexplained weight loss, fever, night sweats, loss of appetite, cough that won't go away, any of these unexplained things, and you're diagnosed with pneumonia, different things, it's not getting better. These are services that ADPH can test for and treat for if need be.

Angela: All right, Miss Loree, thank you so much for being with us today and telling us a little bit about your experience. We're certainly glad it was a good one and we've appreciated that you were such a compliant patient and that your outcome has been so great. So, thank you for coming.

Loree: It was a pleasure. Thank you.

Angela: Thank you.