

For Immediate Release

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Chronic illness created this gift business

Diagnosis doesn't have to mean giving up

Marietta, GA. – May 20, 2011 – You have been experiencing severe headaches for weeks. But when did it start? You know you had a complete physical, but can't remember where or when. How many of us can remember when our symptoms started, and what else was going on our life at the time? Or what our last blood pressure or cholesterol numbers were? If you can't recall or have to sift through mountains of paper to find the information, Angela Shipp has a response.

"Track your health events in a journal," says Shipp, a corporate communications professional who encourages everyone to write it all down via her day-planner style journal, the "bluehealer® diary."

While you might consider medical notes as something only doctors or nurses handle, a personal account of your symptoms, mood or body changes can be valuable information to your physician. The more information you can provide to your doctor during a visit, the better he or she will be able to set up an effective treatment plan. Small details might help your doctor identify problem areas or life threatening medical conditions.

According to Shipp, a health journal is great for recording things like how you are feeling, symptoms and body changes. Tracking this information next to notes about medication, your moods, stress level, diet and exercise might help your physician find a connection between your daily activities and your health. These details can provide critical information when communicating with your doctor about treatment plans.

In addition to the benefit of improved doctor-patient communication, a health journal can be invaluable to patients who are newly diagnosed with a chronic condition. "Facing a long-term medical condition brings countless tests, medications and treatments in addition to a host of life-changing issues," says Shipp. "Writing it all down makes you responsible and might help your physician determine if you are adhering to your medication schedule, diet and treatment regimen."

Perhaps more importantly, a health journal can be helpful in uncovering other problems. "How many times do you skip the family health history section on the form you fill out at the beginning of your doctor's appointment?" asks Shipp. "Did you know that family health history might be one of the strongest indicators of your risk of developing cancer, heart disease or diabetes?" According to a recent U.S. Health and Human Services study, 96 percent of Americans believe that knowing family history is important, yet less than one-third of Americans have ever tried to gather their family's health history. Sharing your family health history with your doctor might help you and your doctor make decisions to reduce your risk of developing certain illnesses. And, in an emergency your family will know where to look for detailed health information.

Publishing has always inspired Shipp. She was ecstatic when a poem she wrote in middle school was published in her school's literary arts book. As a teenager she wrote short stories she was sure would become novels. She designed family newspapers from craft paper and colored pencils.

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So it was no surprise when she graduated from college with a degree in publication management and landed a job in corporate communications. She was 22 and was newly diagnosed with a digestive illness. Shipp was trying to get back on her feet after learning that she had ulcerative colitis, an inflammation and ulceration of the colon. While she had given up hope on having a normal healthy life, the desire to be creative remained. She had a drive to help others who were in her situation, but she didn't have the maturity or tools to make anything happen. Sure, she put some things on paper and had a false start or two. And then life happened.

Shipp became active in the community and mentoring, taking on a closet-full of hats. She was passionate about helping others and began saying "yes" to every opportunity to get involved. She was recognized for her accomplishments with awards, but she was overextended. Going to work every day when she lived with fatigue, fear about the next relapse and the guilt she felt when her illness forced her to miss work or volunteer duties were her biggest challenges yet. Although she kept a calendar to prioritize her professional responsibilities, her social calendar was even stressing her out!

Ten years had passed since Shipp's diagnosis and she still aspired to help those struggling with the same illness. Throughout countless tests, medications and treatments she had developed a calendar to track symptoms, medication and more. Because her health journaling helped her specialist guide her care and helped Shipp organize her life, she decided to design a version that others could use. She wanted to share her method of health journaling with others who were facing any chronic illness.

It took sixteen months from Shipp's aha moment until she had the finished product in her hands. She wrote a business plan and asked family and friends for advice. She researched the library and Internet to see what her competitors were doing. She designed draft after draft of her book and asked a friend to design her logo. She trademarked her product name, without the help of an attorney, and pitched her idea to a few publishers.

Finally her first official copy of the book from the publisher arrived in the mail. "I can't tell you how gratifying it was to hold my book in my hands for the first time, and how proud I felt for following through despite many obstacles," recalls Shipp.

Now, Shipp has launched a host of other products to raise awareness of chronic illness and wellness issues. She hopes to help chronically ill consumers who need inspiration and to help them feel better about their health and themselves.

Fourteen years ago when she received the colitis diagnosis Shipp could have given up and let feelings of unworthiness when she couldn't keep up take over. Instead, she took the opportunity to create something that has the potential to help others realize that despite living with a chronic illness they can conquer any challenge and live life to the fullest.

About the Author

Angela Shipp has learned to balance a hectic career and busy social calendar while staying healthy and organized at the same time. A Woodstock resident, she works full time in Marietta and is the author of bluehealer® diary, a personal command center for family schedules and health journaling. The bluehealer® diary can be found at www.bluehealeradiary.com.

About bluehealer®

bluehealer® offers unique products and content to raise awareness of chronic illness and wellness issues. It offers products for consumers who are concerned about staying well and who need inspiration and tools to help them manage and feel better about their health and themselves. Bluehealer will help consumers take charge of their experience and become an advocate in their own health care with tools to motivate and support them in their goal to live a healthy, well-balanced lifestyle.

Bluehealer's mission is to improve the lives and outcomes of consumer wellness by providing resources to educate patients about their illness and by providing motivational gifts, thereby empowering them to lead healthier and more satisfying lives.

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