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A Moving Experience: Oh to be a diabetic dog!



by C.Flisi

It took my diabetic husband more than six months of phone calls, letters, emails, notes, and anguish (bucketloads of anguish) to be able to

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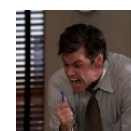
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receive two plastic discs each month to monitor his blood sugar. Each disc has a 14-day duration; he physically attaches it to his arm and passes a reader over it nine times daily to track his sugar levels. The system is called Freestyle Libre and it is made by Abbott Laboratories, but he receives the sensors from another company, which orders them from Abbott and sends them to its diabetic customers all over the country.

All well and good. Actually awful and inefficient, but just before Christmas the first sensors arrived and the distributor promised that they would contact us near the end of every month to ensure that the next month's allocation of sensors would arrive in timely fashion. For a couple of months that seemed to work. Then the first sensor in my husband's February shipment fell off after eight days. I called the distributor and requested another. "Oh you have to call Abbott Laboratories directly," I was told.

I called them. After jumping through various robotic-menu hoops and filling out interminable forms online, I communicated with a Real Person who promised to send a substitute for the defective disc and an envelope for us to return the latter. This package took several days to arrive.

Meanwhile, the second disc my husband had attached as a replacement also fell off, after only two days. This meant he did not have enough sensors to make it through the month. He did have one reserve though, and attached that. The reader gave him the message that it couldn't do a reading of this sensor and would he please try back after 90 minutes? He waited, tried again, and got a message to try back after 40 minutes. He waited and tried again. This time the message suggested he wait 30 minutes.

At this point the only option was to call Abbott and jump through all the bureaucratic hoops again. I gritted my teeth and prepared for the assault.

Only three robotic menus this time, then a Real Person who was obviously reading from a screen so she might just as well have been a bot. She in turn had to consult with her supervisor.

Forty minutes later the upshot was that my husband would be sent two new sensors AND a new reader posthaste. What to do until they arrived? Well, he could ask his doctor for a prescription for blood test strips and do his blood monitoring the old-fashioned way (with finger pricks) in the interim. What that meant was sending a message to the doctor's portal, waiting for a reply, hoping the prescription would be sent to the pharmacy, calling the pharmacy and the doctor until there was confirmation that the prescription had been filled, and then going to pick it up. Or one could simply show up at a pharmacy and pay \$30 for 50 strips, little more than a week's worth.

While my husband was mulling these alternatives, I realized that I needed a

new prescription for a vitamin supplement. My first impulse was to call the doctor's office. Right! The automated response was : "Our staff are busy helping other patients and cannot come to the phone right now. Please leave us a message and we will call you back." Which of course they never did. So I left a similar message on the portal.

Two days later the portal responded: "Your previous prescription can be renewed at your local pharmacy." I went to the pharmacy and was told that they knew nothing of my order.

Called the doctor's office again. Left a phone message again because the doctor is obviously always helping "other patients." Left a message on their portal. Then I decided to accelerate the process this time. I called the company that manages the company that manages this particular doctor's office. That company answered with a Real Person after only one menu cycle. That Real Person said

she would get a message directly to the office manager of my doctor's office. And she did. The office manager, who had had no problems ignoring *me*, could not ignore the company that held *her* purse strings. Office Manager Person said that my prescription order had been sent to Pharmacy A several days ago. "I haven't used Pharmacy A in six months," I informed her. "You have been sending my prescription requests to Pharmacy B since September."

That brought her up short. "Let me talk to the doctor when she has finished with her patients today, and ask her to resend the prescription to Pharmacy B."

Two days later the pharmacy sent me a text message that my prescription had arrived. I called to reconfirm before going to pick it up. The pharmacist said, "Yes the prescription is in order but we can't fill it till next week."

"What do you mean? I have to take this

vitamin supplement every week and I finished my last pill last Friday.”

“Yes, we know. We filled this RX for you at the end of November, but we can’t refill it till mid-March.”

“What do you mean? More than 90 days have passed.”

“Yes, I see that. Maybe there is a problem with the pharmacy you used before us. I will call your doctor’s office to try and straighten this out.”

Contrast these insanities with my dog’s experience. Last week I realized that Giada was running short of a needed pain killer. (She consumes opioids like a West Virginian these days). I called the vet for her. That office called me back an hour later confirming that the RX had been sent to my local pharmacy and I could pick it up at my convenience. And I did. Everything taken care of in one morning.

Conclusion: the only feasible way to be ill in America is to be sick like a dog.

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