

Dear Ontario Minister of Health,

I am writing to you today as a someone who *used* to suffer with atopic dermatitis. I emphasize the past tense because in recent years there have been incredible pharmaceutical breakthroughs in treating this condition. I had the distinct privilege of being a patient in the clinical trial for one of these biological drugs, now on the market under the brand name 'Dupixent.' Unfortunately, as with most revolutionary medicines, the high cost of these drugs makes them unattainable for the vast majority of Canadians/Ontarians. There is a critical need for government support to ensure that all AD sufferers have equal and timely access to these life-changing treatments.

I have suffered with moderate-to-severe Atopic Dermatitis since childhood. My first visit to the doctor was during the early 90s when eczema treatments were not very effective and the condition was not nearly as well understood as it is today. I quickly lost hope that I would find a true source of relief and that this condition was going to be a permanent and defining part of my life and my identity. Through my adolescence and early adulthood, I grew accustomed to having low self-esteem as strangers would ask me about my dry skin and red face. I grew accustomed to not being able to study or focus on stressful tasks because it would cause me to scratch my skin until it was raw and bloody. I grew accustomed to the depression that comes from wearing nothing but hoodies and sweat pants all year round and the feeling that it was unrealistic that I could ever be loved by anyone outside of my immediate family. I begrudgingly accepted all of these limits on the potential for my life...until I was directed to a clinical trial for this drug that truly changed my life.

Dupixent has enabled me to achieve milestones I never imagined possible in the past. I am fortunate that my employer covers most of the cost of the drug, but even with this coverage a significant amount of my take-home pay will go towards paying for this essential medication. However, the reality is that I am much more fortunate than most Canadian citizens who may never reach a life stage where they could possibly hope to afford this medication. While definite improvements have been made to the system, we must work harder on behalf of all Canadians suffering from Atopic Dermatitis.

As a Health Minister, I am asking that you do everything in your power to provide public funding so that we can get these revolutionary treatments to those who desperately need them across all of Canada. These medicines can represent the modern equivalent of a 'miracle cure' for people like myself suffering from Atopic Dermatitis, and it is a tragic and sad injustice that Canadians would have to continue to suffer due to financial constraints knowing that the relief they desperately seek is within arm's reach. I would love the opportunity to meet with you in person to talk more about this issue. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike L.