



MITOCHONDRIAL MEDICINE SOCIETY

Advancing education, research, and global collaboration in clinical mitochondrial medicine

February 3, 2016

To the Medical Advisory Board of Chicago Med

Episode 8 of Season 1 of Chicago Med focused on a child with a diagnosis of presumed mitochondrial disease that was in fact a victim of Medical Child Abuse.

As Mitochondrial Medicine specialists, we at the Mitochondrial Medicine Society, were disappointed at this misleading portrayal of a very real and devastating genetic disorder.

Mitochondrial disorders represent a group of multi-system genetic disorders, presenting heterogeneously, with symptoms that can affect several organs with varying degrees of severity. Due to their rarity and the need for a clinician to recognize their diverse presentations, the diseases can be difficult to diagnose. There exist published peer-reviewed medical guidelines on diagnosis and management. Advances in genetic testing can allow for a diagnosis to be rapidly confirmed. Muscle biopsies are no longer the gold standard diagnostic test of choice. A team based approach is necessary for optimal care.

In recent years, mitochondrial diseases have come to be associated with medical child abuse, in part, due to the sensationalism of a case at Boston Children's Hospital. This association has unfortunately led to families caring for patients with a very real and progressive genetic disorder being falsely accused of medical child abuse and patients not receiving appropriate medical care.

As a popular television show, Chicago Med had the opportunity to tell the story of patients and families suffering with this rare disease. We fear instead that the episode only helped legitimize misconceptions held about the disease.

We, in partnership with mitochondrial disease support organizations UMDF and MitoAction, urge the lay media to provide an accurate representation of this disorder.

Sincerely,

The Mitochondrial Medicine Society (MMS)*

* The MMS is a medical professional society of physicians who treat and manage patients with mitochondrial disease. Visit us at <http://www.mitosoc.org/>.

For more information, you can also visit www.umdf.org and www.mitoaction.org . You are welcome to attend the many regional symposia sponsored by these groups to educate physicians and families about mitochondrial disease.