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The Christie Report

Social Security Disability

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Personal Message - *from Sharon*

Solving the Cruel Mystery of Lupus

As some of you know, I have been on the Board of the Lupus Foundation: DC-Md-Va Chapter for several years. This year I am the President of the Board. I have represented many disability clients who have Lupus. You may have heard of Lupus if you ever watched the TV show "House." I never saw the show but I am told that, whenever Dr. House was confronted with a disease that he and the other doctors could not identify he said, "Maybe it's Lupus." Well, that captures the nature of this disease very well.

Lupus is a terrible autoimmune disease affecting primarily women, although I have represented men and children who suffer from this disease. (About 10% of Lupus patients are men.) Lupus is characterized by pain, severe fatigue (cannot get out of bed and do anything type fatigue), brain "fog" and a host of other symptoms. It takes most people 5-7 years just to get a diagnosis. Patients frequently are told "it's in your head." The disease is bad enough but not having medical people take you seriously makes it even worse. Lupus takes an active person and reduces her or him to someone who struggles just to get out of bed and make breakfast. It is a "cruel mystery" because we do not know the cause and there is no cure. In fact, in the last 50 years there has been only one new drug developed to treat Lupus. The DC-Md-Va chapter of the Lupus Foundation (LFA-DMV) is dedicated to solving this cruel mystery. LFA-DMV actively supports lupus sufferers with extensive educational programs, support groups, Patient Navigators, Emergency Assistance funds, and much more.

Every year the Lupus Foundation sponsors walks all over the country. This year the Maryland walk is on Saturday, September 12 from 9-11AM at Rash Field. If you suffer from Lupus or know someone who does or if you want to support this cause, please consider making a donation to the Walk. I am sponsoring a team: Christie's Crusaders. If you'd like to help, you can join my team and walk OR just make a donation at my fundraising page. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/walktoendlupusmd>. That will take you to the donation page. If you look on the right hand side you can either search for me as a participant or search for my team. Click on my name and you can either join the team or make a donation. Thank you!

We all have an unsuspected reserve of strength inside that emerges when life puts us to the test.

~ Isabel Allende

Thanks for the Referrals

The greatest compliment I can receive is for clients and colleagues to refer new clients. Thank you to everyone who referred clients since our last newsletter.

Jennifer Broaddus

Pat Brooks

Sharon Fowler

Victoria Grace, Esq.

William Hamm

William Hartman

Sharon Murphy, MD

Mary O'Byrne, Esq.

Yvette Peloquin

John Sandbower, Esq.

Weinstock, Friedman & Friedman

Bradley Wentworth

Should I Agree to a Video Hearing?

If your claim for Social Security disability benefits is denied and you appeal, you will be entitled to a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). You may receive a brochure from the Social Security Administration ("SSA") encouraging you to accept a video hearing. The brochure assures you that, "Except for the equipment, a video hearing is no different than a hearing at which you appear in person." It probably also explains all sorts of advantages of having a video hearing, namely the fact that your hearing can be scheduled sooner. You may be tempted to agree to a video hearing but this may not be in your best interest.

No one who is involved in disability hearings actually likes video hearings. Not the Administrative Law Judges, not the experts, not the attorneys and, least of all, the claimants. Claimants, such as you, have been waiting to tell their story to a judge in person. The video equipment fundamentally changes the nature of the interaction between the claimant and the ALJ. If you appear via video, the judge only gets to see a two dimensional image of you and not an actual live person. That means that it may be harder for the judge to get a sense of who you are and, also, you cannot get the same satisfaction of telling your story when it's a video hearing. However, the advantage of a video hearing is that it may be scheduled sooner than it will be if you wait for an "in person" hearing.

Remember that you have the ability to veto appearing by video. According to the Social Security Regulations, you can object to appearing by video, but if you do so your ALJ can find that to be good cause for changing the time or place of the hearing. Therefore, the ALJ will probably reschedule the hearing for a time and place where you can appear in person. Interestingly, this does not apply to the appearances of experts. If you do not want an expert to appear by video you cannot make the same objection. In fact, Social Security Regulations do not explain what constitutes good cause for requiring an expert witness to appear in person rather than by video. ALJs will rarely grant requests for experts to appear in person.

Aging Safer With Technology

"Baby boomers will be the new disrupters who adopt the technologies, because they expect to live better." says Mr. Coughlin, director of the AgeLab at MIT.

"Gadgets that can ease the burdens of aging are slowly beginning to appear in older adult's homes and communities. They are designed to respond to vital needs, including caregiving, transportation and living more safely at home. Technology specialists say that these new devices can help older adults stay in their homes longer and more cheaply, and even help prevent serious illnesses." [Gustke, C. (2015, July 24) Technology, While Not a Fountain of Youth, Can Make Aging Safer. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>]

One such gadget is the Lively Safety Watch, which is an Apple Watch look-alike. It has an alert button (for when the wearer needs help), displays the time, has a step counter, has a medication alert (to let the wearer know when to take their pills) AND it looks very cool!

Another technology that is currently available are sensors that can be discreetly placed around the home (i.e. on refrigerator door, on front door, etc.) so that others can be alerted when there's been no activity. As one resident of a community for older adults said, "It's quiet care." There are also sensors available that track vital health data!

All this is great, however, social interaction is just as important. Personally, I'm looking forward to the Google car which will be able to drive me wherever I want to go, even after my family takes my car keys away! 😊

Stand UP! It's been said that "sitting is the new smoking." Recent research has shown that those who spend most of their day standing, walking and even pacing live longer, healthier lives. Interestingly, a day of sitting cannot be counteracted by going to the gym! We need to be up on our feet and moving consistently throughout each day. So stand up while talking on the phone, folding clothes, drinking coffee and during each TV commercial walk in place or dance. When you're on the computer, stand then, too! You can make yourself a standing desk by putting boxes on your desk top to hold your laptop and/or keyboard and monitor. You're not sitting down while reading this, are you??

For Clients Only

At Sharon Christie Law we want to make your experience as a client great. We want you to have information about the disability process every step of the way. That is why we added a "Client's Only" section to our website. All current clients have a password that gives them access to the content there.

In the "For Clients Only" section, you will find information that we do not share with the general public. We will continue to add valuable information & will update you in every newsletter about the new information available to you.

Here's what's currently available to you: (*=new)

General Information

- (video) Confidentiality
- *(Video) Adult Function
- *(Video) What You Can Do to Strengthen Your Case

Application

- (video) Application—What Is The Timeline?

Reconsideration Stage

- (video) First Denial

Hearing Stage

- (video) Second Denial
- *(Video) Video Hearing
- (video) What Will Happen At My Hearing?
- (video) How To Dress For Your Hearing
- *(Video) Will We Have Witnesses?

Favorable Decision

- (video) Fully Favorable Decision
- *(Video) Award Letter
- *(Video) Taxes
- *(Video) Can I Work After I Get Disability Benefits?

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To receive a FREE copy of
Sharon Christie's

Unofficial Guide to Social Security Disability Claims

Call 410-823-8200
or visit our website at
www.SharonChristieLaw.com

FREE SEMINARS

Register at
Sharonchristielaw.com/events/seminars
Or call 410-823-8200

August—no seminar
Sept. 29, 6-8pm White Marsh Library
July 30, 6-8pm White Marsh Library



The **Law Office of Sharon A. Christie** helps disabled workers get disability benefits from Social Security. It is a long and complicated process and you should not go it alone.

The firm's founder, Sharon A. Christie, is a nurse as well as an attorney.

Sharon's clients receive the benefit of having their cases handled by a firm that knows the medicine AND the law.

If you have applied for Social Security disability benefits and need help, call the firm today. If you need more information about the process, go to the website and order a FREE copy of:

Sharon Christie's Unofficial Guide to Social Security Disability Claims

or register for one of her upcoming webinars or seminars!

For more information, visit our website at:
www.SharonChristieLaw.com.

Office Hours

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Social Security Disability



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