

# THE COALITION TO PRESERVE PATIENT ACCESS TO PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

Press conference: "CMS: Compromised Quality of Patient Care"

Testimony from: Barbara J. Milleville

Patient receiving Low Vision Therapy Services

Representatives from The Coalition to Preserve Patient Access to Physical Medicine and  
Rehabilitation Services to Urge Congress to Overturn New CMS Rule

November 16, 2005

The Rayburn Building, Room 2257, Washington, D.C.

Good Morning,

I'm Barbara Milleville from Vienna, Virginia. I'd like to share a bit of my journey with you as a recipient of vision rehabilitation services.

I'm partially sighted, blind in one eye and see about ten percent of what a "normal" person sees in the other eye. I've been visually impaired all of my life. My visual conditions are retinopathy of prematurity and glaucoma. I'm single and my family is over 400 miles away.

I've had opportunity to work with rehab teachers along with orientation and mobility folks in three states (New York, Georgia and Virginia) off and on over the last 25 years. So, I'm particularly knowledgeable about the services that are provided and what a positive impact they've had in my life.

As I've worked with them,

- They've given me the opportunity to get to know others who have low vision.
- Rehab teachers were role models for me - "hey, it can be done and here's how".
- They taught me how to compensate for loss of vision, how to cook, clean and manage finances.
- I learned how to ask for directions and how to cross an eight lane highway to get to work.
- Just as important, they helped me realize what I can't do, and to delegate those tasks.
- Rehab teachers also assisted in identifying strengths and setting career goals.
- They gave me self confidence and courage to go to college and graduate, working part time all the way through.
- In essence, I got my independence!

I've worked for major corporations such as IBM and Booz Allen Hamilton over the last 15 years or so. I've successfully relocated 6 times. I'm living proof that this vision rehab training stuff works.

I'm currently not working due to some recent vision changes. I miss work. I want to go back. The doctors tell me that I'd benefit from further training to learn how to use my

remaining vision better. I need to learn how to use my ears more instead of my eyes so I can read faster and for longer periods of time.

My private health insurance plan won't cover this training. And, in light of the ruling, probably won't ever do so. I've had to choose between getting this training and eating. Guess which one I picked.

It's been a long haul. I've worked really hard to make a life for myself. Now, I'm scared about the future and how this ruling will impact my life. I don't know what the future will bring as far as my vision is concerned. How will I cope if there's no one to help me?

I don't want to depend on others. I wonder, "Will I ever be able to work and own my own home again"? With all of these changes, I don't know. I do know that I want my independence back! I also know that vision loss brings with it unique challenges. I need to work with professionals who are trained in this field and can provide approaches that produce results.

*Barbara J. Milleville speaking on behalf of the Coalition to Preserve Patient Access to Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services, Nov. 16, 2005*