

TEAMING UP WITH AN ENDOCRINOLOGIST

PLAYING TO WIN

Anna Antons has a measured approach to life, an easygoing manner that belies the balancing act she must manage to live with three chronic disorders.

Her condition could be life-threatening if left untreated. But Anna, 38, manages well. She has found an ally in Arun Movva, MD, Medical Director of Mercy's Joslin Diabetes Center and Cedar Rapids' first endocrinologist.

Endocrinologists diagnose and treat diseases that affect glands (pancreas, thyroid, adrenal, pituitary, etc.), which are part of the endocrine system and secrete hormones. Most of Dr. Movva's patients have chronic conditions like diabetes and thyroid disorders. He also treats thyroid cancer and other gland disorders.

Anna, a Cedar Rapids native, has had Type 1 diabetes since age 12. Managing that was somewhat familiar as her mother has diabetes. But life grew more complicated after 2006, when Anna developed two other chronic endocrine disorders: an under-active thyroid (Hashimoto's thyroiditis) and adrenal insufficiency (Addison's disease), in which her adrenal glands stopped functioning.

Together, the three disorders are known as autoimmune polyglandular syndrome (Schmidt's syndrome), which can be controlled through medications.

Autoimmune polyglandular syndrome is not common and it took some time before she was accurately diagnosed. Diagnosis of Addison's disease and hypothyroidism can be difficult due

to their nonspecific symptoms: extreme fatigue, weakness and weight changes. Anna had those, plus a change in skin pigmentation in 2006 that left her tan and freckled.

Her exhaustion worsened and she struggled to make it to work. In 2007, her hypothyroidism was diagnosed. But the hyper-pigmentation was triggered by Addison's disease, diagnosed in 2008.

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Anna Antons, Dr. Movva Patient

"It was really a full year before I could get back to the full swing of things, once I was diagnosed," Anna adds. "It was a relief to know what was wrong."

Anna began seeing Dr. Movva in January 2009. She now uses an insulin pump, feels better and sees him every three months.

"She's doing really well right now," Dr. Movva says. "These are chronic diseases that she will have for the rest of her

life. My role is managing those conditions effectively and educating her as to what to expect and how to live with those diseases."

That includes recognizing signs that she might need an alteration in her medication dosages. Illness or unusual stress can trigger fluctuations in her blood sugars or blood pressure.

"If I'm running a fever, I have to take extra steroids," Anna notes.

"I have to be careful."

The diseases she lives with also put her at higher risk for conditions like heart disease, blindness or osteoporosis.

"There are a lot of things that need to be watched closely," Dr. Movva explains. "We need to think about the side effects of every treatment, and the long-term effects of each disease."

Anna accepts those complications.

"It doesn't really affect what I can or can't do," she says of her autoimmune disorders. "It's very manageable now. Sometimes it's frustrating, but I just accept it."



Arun K. Movva, MD
Endocrinologist
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Mercy Health Plaza



Anna Antons is able to cheer on her favorite team, the Iowa Hawkeyes, with the help of medication that counters the effects of three chronic health disorders.

