

# Recalling the Cure

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I don't know exactly when it happened. But a point came when I stopped regularly thinking about a cure for diabetes. It doesn't cross my mind daily, weekly, monthly, or even yearly. I donate to and support causes that provide research for a cure, but I do so mechanically, not because I'm waiting for a cure.

When I was a kid, my dad used to come home with special teas, herbs in unmarked packages, and instructional pamphlets on foot reflexology. These were supposed to cure diabetes. My dad, like many parents of children newly diagnosed, was exasperated. He wanted my diabetes to be undone.

As a kid on the receiving end of teas and other herbal remedies, I believed that I would be cured in no time.

But when I wasn't cured over and over, my optimism began to dwindle. When my dad or other well-meaning people sent me information about promising research trials or a cure that's five years away, my eyes would glaze over. I wasn't bitter; I just took the attitude that if a real cure materialized, then I'd get excited.

After eighteen years with diabetes, my focus has shifted to being part of the diabetes community, being an advocate, and living well despite my faulty pancreas. Diabetes has become so engrained in my being that it no longer feels like an intruder. It's not *life with diabetes*, but rather just *life*.

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A few months ago, Gary and I received an invitation to the Diabetes Research Institute's annual Crystal Ball. I've attended various diabetes events in the past, but none from DRI. I knew that DRI is cure-centric and even though I'm not always up on the latest research, the event looked like fun and I wanted to learn more. We hired Maya's favorite babysitter, who also happens to work for free. (Thanks, Grandma!)

With my insulin pump strapped to my thigh and an evening bag bursting with diabetes supplies, I was ready to party.

The event took place at The Garden City hotel in Long Island, New York. The entry displayed a silent auction filled with an extensive array of jewelry, handbags, signed sports memorabilia, and more. Cocktails and food were plentiful. A live auction later that night offered unique gifts like an adorable puppy, and one night on a yacht for you and your friends. (Opening bid: \$7,500!)



The speakers, most of whom were being honored, made it clear that they wholeheartedly believe in DRI's mission. Allan L. Pashcow, for one, received the Gillin Family Humanitarian Award. He spoke of his wife's diabetes diagnosis 38 years ago. He said that, at the time, he knew nothing about diabetes. And now, 38 years later, he knows everything about it... except how to cure it.

His words, so simple, were incredibly relatable. All of us with diabetes or close to someone with it know the disease intimately. If we had to test our blood sugar with our eyes closed, the muscle memory in our hands would know the dance by heart. Our loved ones cheer us on and all the while, allow diabetes to permeate their lives too. Before they know it, they're calculating insulin to carb ratios like champs.

We *know* diabetes.

And yet.

The cure remains a mystery. But, Mr. Pashcow sounded confident that the researchers at DRI would be the ones to unlock the mystery.

I had the opportunity to meet Roberta Waller. She and her family were the event's Presenting Sponsor. She was incredibly gracious and her dedication to DRI and finding a cure for diabetes was inspiring.

A scientist from DRI spoke about a DRI BioHub. DRI's literature regarding BioHub describes it as "a bioengineered 'mini-organ' that mimics the native pancreas, containing thousands of insulin producing cells that sense blood sugar levels and release the precise amount of insulin needed – in real time. A DRI BioHub brings the promise of restoring natural insulin production to millions of children and adults living with diabetes."

Maybe it was the camaraderie in the room. Or maybe it was the Rum & Diet Coke. But for the first time in a long time, the promise of a cure sparked my attention. It seemed attainable. I had a flashback to my childhood: to the hope for a cure. I was reminded that, *Maybe I've forgotten. But DRI hasn't! They have really, really smart people working on this all the time.* How lucky we are!

At the end of the evening, Gary and I made our way to a packed dance floor; a spirited crowd danced and sang to *Don't Stop Believin'* and it felt very apropos.