



Your Questions Answered

Do you want to remain in your home? Should funds be expended to make it accessible? Do you want to authorize charitable gifts, for example to organizations helping those with the same neurologic condition you face?

Consider permitting—or, if your condition worsens, even mandating—that an independent care manager be retained to create a healthcare plan for you, and that the expenditures reflected in that plan be incorporated into the budget your successor trustees use. A care manager is often a social worker, registered nurse, or other professional who has additional training and credentials to qualify them to help you manage your overall care. Using a care manager who is not involved in your regular medical or personal care can be a useful safeguard. If something is amiss, that person can report it to your family.

Disability: Most revocable living trusts are created with the idea that you are well when you sign and that disability, if it occurs, will be once and for all. While this might be true for some conditions, it is far too simplistic for many others, especially those that are chronic, progressive, or wax and wane in intensity.

Importantly, the simple definitions used for disability in most legal documents would likely categorize you as disabled and remove you from being your own trustee if you were even temporarily hospitalized. Be sure to read these provisions carefully and make sure that they are tailored to protect you and reflect the nuances of your condition.

A variant on the usual definition that might be useful to someone with a neurologic condition is to provide that you will not be deemed disabled unless you are unable to manage your affairs for at least 30 consecutive days due to disability. This length of time (maybe longer depending on your condition) could avoid your being removed as a trustee for a temporary flare-up or hospitalization.

Monitor: Another modification that can be made to a revocable living trust is to create a “monitor” relationship. For example, an independent accountant or person can be designated to receive and review monthly brokerage and bank statements for your trust. This can provide an important check and balance on the trustees—even you. Setting up a monitor relationship can assure that someone periodically reviews financial data for improprieties. If a successor trustee is serving in the future when you are not able to serve as a co-trustee, then the monitor may identify any improprieties and thus help assure your resources are used for your needs and care. 

FIBROMYALGIA

Q *Can fibromyalgia symptoms be managed effectively without drugs?*



**CHARLES
E. ARGOFF
RESPONDS:**

A Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a common condition that involves long-term, body-wide pain and tenderness in the joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. FMS has also been linked to fatigue, sleep problems, headaches, depression, and anxiety. While no one can say with absolute certainty what causes FMS, we are learning more about the role of central nervous system excitability in connection with FMS.

Because it is a condition that affects people very differently, FMS should be treated by addressing the specific symptoms that are most bothersome to the individual who has it. The most effective approach almost always requires a combination of drug and non-drug therapies.

Evidence shows that people with FMS are often helped simply by learning that they have a condition that can be treated.

A non-drug approach with strong evidence for people with FMS is aerobic exercise. Moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, strength training, and swimming pool-based programs are associated with more consistent benefits than flexibility training and stretching. It is important for the person with FMS to adhere to a consistent exercise regimen in order to see improvement.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is also a potentially helpful non-drug treatment for FMS. The basis of CBT is that changing maladaptive thinking leads to changes in mood and in behavior, allowing a person to function more effectively. CBT generally requires working with a specially trained professional, such as a psychotherapist. At least one study has found that patients treated with CBT in addition to drug therapy obtain more benefit than those treated with standard drug therapy alone.

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