

Ferrybank Carer's 'Living Nightmare'



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome has left Ferrybank native Teresa O'Brien unable to dress herself in recent weeks.

A Ferrybank woman suffering from Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), who was initially told she'd be facing a two-year wait for an appointment about her condition at Cork University Hospital, will now meet with a specialist in September.

Speaking to The Munster Express, Teresa O'Brien (59) said the pain in her hands has become so severe that she can no longer dress or wash herself.

And, as a city-based carer for over 10 years, Teresa has found this particularly difficult to come to terms with.

"It's hard to describe this to someone not going through it themselves," she began.

"My hands and wrists are in constant pain, I'm taking between 10 and 12 painkillers every day and the pain is so intense that I can't get any sleep or rest worth talking about."

The pain, which began to intensify roughly two months ago, led Teresa to visit University Hospital Waterford (UHW), where she received pain-killing injections in an attempt to make her more comfortable.

"The Doctor who dealt with me couldn't have been nicer - he was lovely - but, and I realise he was only doing his job, he told me that if I had private insurance, more could have been done for me in Waterford. All he did was tell me the truth. But because I don't have it, I've been referred to Cork, where I was told there was a two-year waiting list.

"Telling someone in the sort of pain I'm in that you'll have to wait two years to be seen by a specialist, well it was just devastating to be told something like that.

"But, I got news early last week that rather than have this hanging over me for the next two years that I've got an appointment for this September, which, when you're in the pain I'm in still feels like a long way away, but it's better than what I was told a few weeks ago."

Mrs O'Brien added: "You hear about the way things have gone in Ardkeen the last few years, but you don't really get a sense of how much it's gone to the dogs until you're looking for help out there only to be told that you can't get that help unless you have private health insurance.

“Doctors appear to be out to make as much money as they can, as far as I’m concerned, as opposed to helping people - I thought they took an oath about that being their primary duty. But since I now have the appointment in Cork this September, it seems like someone out in the hospital must have seen that I was in such distress and constant pain; someone was actually listening to me.

“Don’t get me wrong: the nurses in the hospital are doing a great job in very tough circumstances, but they’ve one hand tied behind their back out there, and people in Waterford are suffering because of what’s been allowed to happen to our hospital. And I’m one of them.”

Teresa, who is also a diabetic, has been reduced to seeking assistance from her daughter when it’s come to both dressing and washing herself.

“To depend on my family at a time in my life when I shouldn’t have to be even thinking about, to be talking about not being able to wash or dress myself, to not be able to put on your own underwear in comfort, sure you’d want to be made of stone not to be upset about something like that.”

She continued: “What makes this even more frustrating is the absence of any line of worthwhile communication within the health system.

“I’d a letter of urgency written to Cork by my Doctor on June 2nd outlining just how much pain I was in and the severity of my condition, yet when I first rang Cork about the letter, the person I was speaking to had no knowledge of the letter at all, which I found incredibly frustrating.”

Audibly wincing on the phone while we spoke, Teresa hopes something can be done to alleviate her agony in the long term.

“I don’t want to be put on any more painkillers. I’ve had my fill of them. I just hope they can figure out how to make my life comfortable again, because I’m weary of living in constant pain. I’ve had enough of it.”