

“This is my wish for you:

Comfort on difficult days,
Smiles when sadness intrudes,
Rainbows to follow the clouds,
Laughter to kiss your lips,
Sunsets to warm your heart,
Hugs when spirits sag,
Beauty for your eyes to see,
Friendships to brighten your being,
Faith so that you can believe,
Confidence for when you doubt,
Courage to know yourself,
Patience to accept the truth and
Love to complete your life.”

lessonslearnedinlife.com

*You don't know
how strong you are
until being strong
is your only choice.*

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*If you are interested in locating or
starting a support group in your area,
please contact:*

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**SCLERODERMA
FOUNDATION**

SUPPORT • EDUCATION • RESEARCH

TEXAS BLUEBONNET CHAPTER



What is Scleroderma?



Literally, scleroderma means “hard skin”; however, the disease is better defined as being characterized as the hardening of the body’s connective tissue. Approximately 300,000 individuals in the United States are affected by the disease, African-Americans more frequently and at an earlier age. Scleroderma is a chronic, autoimmune disease which, while currently having no cure, has several new treatment options that improve quality of life and life expectancy.

Patients and Newly Diagnosed

A new diagnosis of scleroderma doesn't have to be overwhelming, even though the disease is complex. The symptoms of scleroderma vary greatly for each person, and the disease's effects can range from mild to severe. The severity depends on which parts of the body and to what extent in which they are affected. A mild case can become serious if not properly treated. Quick and proper diagnosis and treatment by qualified physicians may help minimize the symptoms of scleroderma and decrease the chance of irreversible damage.

Managing a Chronic Illness

While there is no proven cure for scleroderma, much can be done to prevent, minimize or alleviate its effects and symptoms. Scleroderma symptoms vary greatly from individual to individual; the manner in which each person responds to treatment also varies greatly; and there are many treatment options. It is important that a physician experienced in scleroderma management works out an individually tailored program to meet the specific needs of a person with this disease. Close cooperation with the physician will help him or her develop such a program.

The emotional aspects of scleroderma

A common reaction to being told that one has a disease such as scleroderma is “Why me?” It is unknown why some people develop the disease and others do not. One does not bring scleroderma upon himself or herself; therefore, one shouldn't feel guilty or responsible for the illness.

A person newly diagnosed with scleroderma may feel alone and uncertain about where to turn for help. He or she may experience a number of other feelings and emotional reactions from time to time, including initial shock or disbelief, fear, anger, denial, self-blame, guilt, grief, sadness or depression. Family members may have similar feelings. Feelings in themselves are neither good nor bad. One simply has them. Sharing them with family and friends or with others who have had similar experiences can help. Professional counseling also can help people with scleroderma and their family members who are having difficulty coping with their feelings. We try to use the term “person with

scleroderma” instead of “scleroderma patient.” The person with scleroderma may be a “patient” in the physician’s office, hospital or clinic, but he or she is much more than that. Thinking of oneself as a total person with a full life to lead may help to keep scleroderma in perspective and enable one to maintain a positive but realistic attitude.

Why are Support groups so important

Each Support group provides a setting which is conducive for sharing concerns, information and feelings, in a confidential environment, where members provide encouragement, coping strategies and mutual support. Meetings have both a social and educational component which may include a guest speaker or DVD presentation. We encourage patients to attend with their caregivers and family members allowing all to come to a better understanding of a patient’s journey with Scleroderma, how this journey affects their relationships with others and to voice their own concerns when needed.



Types of Events in Texas

“Stepping out to Cure Scleroderma” Walk held annually in Dallas, San Antonio and Houston. Patient Education Events (check website for details). Support group Speakers (check website for details).