

# Patient Perspective: Trish Peters

I was the kind of kid who jumped in puddles, went on roller coasters, and played every sport you could think of. I chased an adrenaline rush. I wanted to feel my stomach drop every moment of my life, whether it was school, sports, or activities. Lo and behold, life had something else in store for my family and me. At the age of 11, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). My parents and I had no idea what that was or what to make of it. As a kid who loved doing things, I didn't know how to stop doing activities I loved, and my parents didn't want to stop me either.

But the pain, flare-ups, and moments of complete and utter failure where I felt like I couldn't function by myself anymore were frequent. As a result, I threw myself into studying. I was able to complete my bachelor's degree, and I decided that I wanted to pursue not just one but two masters right after I graduated. At that juncture, I wanted to embrace the things I could not do in my childhood: live worry-free. I wanted to be worry-free from injections, pills, pain, and pain management. I felt as though doing a master's would allow me to live a life where I was independent and finally had my arthritis under control.

So, in January of 2023, I packed up everything that was important to me into two suitcases and moved 6,000 km away, to be exact, 6,103 km away. Two days of travelling later, I landed on a new continent, in a new country, and in my own apartment where I would officially be alone. As a child with arthritis, I never thought I could live alone. It hasn't been easy; I've had to find doctors, get bloodwork, and figure out how to bring all my medication so far away from the place I called home.

When I'm ill, I have to depend on myself; when I can't zip up my jackets because of a flare, I have to figure out how to do it on my own. But I never thought I would be able to do it as a kid with arthritis, and now, not only am I proving myself wrong, but I'm hoping I'm able to give hope to every child out there with arthritis too.

My goal was always to find a way to inspire kids with arthritis. And now, with the things I've been able to accomplish with a lot of support and perseverance, I know that as a young adult with arthritis, there is always a way for me and other kids who are in this situation to do what we want in life. To all kids who have been diagnosed with



RA, I would say: "Never let arthritis stop you from accomplishing any goal in your life, regardless of how big or small. Sometimes, things must be changed to accommodate how you live life, which is perfectly okay. Make the world your oyster rather than letting it tell you that you can't do something."

*Trish Peters, BCom  
MIB & MSCIB Student, Queen's University  
Maastricht, Limburg, Netherlands*