



SENATOR STATEMENT

Remarks of the Honourable Diane F. Griffin

Senator for Prince Edward Island

May 24, 2018

Honourable Senators,

May 12 was International Awareness Day for myalgic encephalomyelitis — also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia.

This date was chosen as it was the birthdate of Florence Nightingale, the British Army nurse who became chronically ill with what is thought to have been Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and was housebound and often bedridden for most of her life.

Symptoms include fatigue, inappropriate loss of physical and mental stamina after exertion, sleep dysfunction and pain. It also affects the neurological, endocrine and immune systems.

My own family has been impacted with two sisters-in-law, one with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and the other with Fibromyalgia. These formerly very active women find it difficult to plan their lives as they don't know how they will feel when the day of an event arrives. For instance, will they have the energy and feel well enough to participate in a family reunion and enjoy it? Another instance, a cousin had to retire early as a high school art teacher even though she loved teaching art to appreciative students.

There are not yet tests to identify Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Fibromyalgia, so all other illnesses with overlapping symptoms must be ruled out before these diagnoses are considered.

Because we don't have good diagnostic tools, it is hard for sufferers to get proper care.

There is much that can be done to help these Canadians including supporting research, raising awareness, combating stereotypes and ensuring programs are inclusive.