**My Story of a Great Comeback**

**[Andrew Berlack](https://www.facebook.com/andrew.berlack)**

Overcoming Crohn's Disease that had become debilitating from 2002 to 2010 was allot of hard work. I was initially diagnosed in 1987 that was after about 10 months of knife stabbing doubled over stomach pain that would come on at any time. I was 21 and dropped to 115 pounds, my mom had just passed away from artery disease right about the time I started getting the stomach pains. It was not a pleasant time for my dad, brother and I. I would have to say that one of the most traumatic and just unreal events was after one off my initial surgeries around the rectal area for the Crohn's. This was just when the symptoms had started up, and had an outpatient operation. I was sent home packed full of gauze and tape of course, and to let the wound heal on its own by daily dressings. That night, the initial dressing was saturated with blood, so I took a shower I immediately started gauzing up that whole area and taped it, and fell asleep with my cloths and jeans on.

I woke up a couple hours later, and 100% of my jeans had been completely soaked in blood from top to bottom, 0 exaggerations I'm sorry to say:) The wound had never clotted, and just out of adrenalin, I drove myself to the ER very early in the morning where I had the sugary the prior day. I had changed my jeans and drawers before going, and there were chunks of blood everywhere, yeah? uggh:) After getting to the ER, I almost passed out, as they got a gurney over to me. The ER nurse said I had allot of guts getting myself there, it was an ambulance ride if she ever saw it. She also said that it was not smart at all by doing that! and she was totally right!, about not getting an ambulance! It was a very long and stressful night, 7 hours of waiting until the doctors came in that later that morning and to start working on me. That was officially some of the most brutal pain I had ever been in, I didn't ask or even know if pain medication was being used?, I was so in shock I guess? They fixed everything, but that was a far too eventful way to start my fight with CD again. Although, after that event, it made even some of my other operations seem like just gravy generally speaking:).

After tons of hospital time, procedure's, the pain factor on and off for 8 years, also being bed ridden for up to 2 or 3 months at a time and endless doctor appts was a certainly a challenge and exhausting, but I never got fed up due to the adrenalin took over and wanting to get better. I had been a Federal Police Officer with the D.O.D. from 2003 to 2007, and needed to retire/disability in 2007 due to the Crohn's was just way out of control, and had exhausted all medications and that was my new full time job:) It took 9 operations and permanent colostomy to do it, I had my rectum and anus, more than half my colon removed and got a permanent ostomy.I had always kept a great sense of humor about it all whenever I could! When I talk about the challenges that I was presented with, I took and my surgeon a very aggressive and hard hitting and head on approach with the Crohn's. She knew that due to my Crohn's had been long term, and getting the constant fistula's, that It was very likely it would have turned into cancer.

I always sort of felt in a way that the operations were the easy part, it was everything that goes along with it on a daily basis that I thought had the most stressful. Due to post op complications on several occasions due to post op infection's that let to very high temperatures. There had been other times that I needed to go to the ER or Urgent care due to I was dripping blood that would not stop. So, several ambulance rides to the ER, having a wound vac a few times and the dressing changes from that were officially brutal pain. The tape would sometimes stick to to the wound and yeah! that hurt! One story was when the home health care nurse came over to change the wound dressing. She was not able to stop the bleeding and I was spurting blood continuously.

That was a trip to the ER by ambulance and all involved did a great job. The ER doctor was in fact able to stitch up the area that was bleeding and did a great job. I had asked him if he thought I would will make it back home tonight in time to see the NASCAR race on TV, and he said I would) I always talk about all the things I can do or will be able to do, then then talk about things I can’t do, and I never said why me, and I never will! I also really enjoy mentoring others who have Crohn's Disease who may be having a hard time coping and I feel obligated on passing along the motivational tools I used to keep pushing forward. Now I just take Humira every two weeks and that has kept the Crohn's under control:)

I have found that just by being myself and keeping my humor about things that has in fact inspired others. It keeps me even more motivated and I have never felt more mentally stronger, and am a better person for it all!:) I do think many things happen for a reason. I think what is a really long story that had turned into a success story, and when there was many times that I was given plenty of reasons to get fed up and let the disease take control of me. I refused to allow that to happen and as a matter of fact, the more that was thrown at me the harder I pushed it right back. Being there is no known cure for Crohn's and keeping it under control is a daily concern and challenge. When we moved to Minnesota in the spring of 2010, my only real stress and anxiety was getting a whole new team of doctors, sort of like going to a new school. I has started getting sort of a constipated feeling in my stomach one night, the next day I was still not passing any gas our off my stoma. I admit I was still very green on having an ostomy and just didn't really know the warning signs. The 3rd morning, I had passed just a tiny amount of bowel, and my stomach felt mile a medicine ball!:)

My wife and I went to the ER and the nurse said flat out it’s a good thing you came in. I had the x-rays done, and I did have a blockage caused by a flare from an old Crohn's surgery, and that blocked everything. So, I needed to get a NG tube in me for 3 days, also IVs that were steroids, prednisone and Cipro to get the flare to go down, in 5 days in worked!, and came very close to avoiding surgery. The 3rd day my new surgeon took out my NG tune, I just wanted to give her a big hug I was so relived and happy! So, after our move I got all my new doctor's the easy way!, by being admitted into what was a great hospital, I got my new GI doctor, primary care physician and colon rectal surgeon all in d days!) The wild part is, aside from my surgeon back in D.C., who was great, I now have the best GI doctor I have ever had, and his office and team specialize in Cohn’s Disease, UC and IBD.

Also, my primary care physician is the best I have ever had as well. After that event, my GI doctor had started me on Humira, and it has been outstanding and has kept the Crohn's Disease under control with no problems. It’s certainly allot more fun to keep it under control and to do everything I can to keep it that way thus enjoying the great quality of life I have now!:) I can play hockey again and I don't even notice the ostomy, and just started a great job where I'm am able to strap on an armed and packed duty belt, and it does not affect the ostomy!: Now more than anything I would really like to mentor others who are battling Crohn's or UC Colitis, as well as patients preparing or have had ostomy surgery. Mainly to just be able to pass along the motivational tools I used to keep fighting and pushing forward so in the hope of inspiring others who could really use that! And from someone who has been there, so they really know that I get it and sincerely understand how they are feeling. Even if it just to give them a good laugh would be beneficial, and just talking about how to keep fighting and don't stop until you get it under control! I never said why me and I never will, I found that buy being very proactive and hitting the Crohn's head on 24/7 was the only way I was going to be able to get my life back, and the sooner the better, and I did!:) I really hope others can to, it’s just takes a ton of determination and fight, like many others have done as well to get the Crohn's under control!