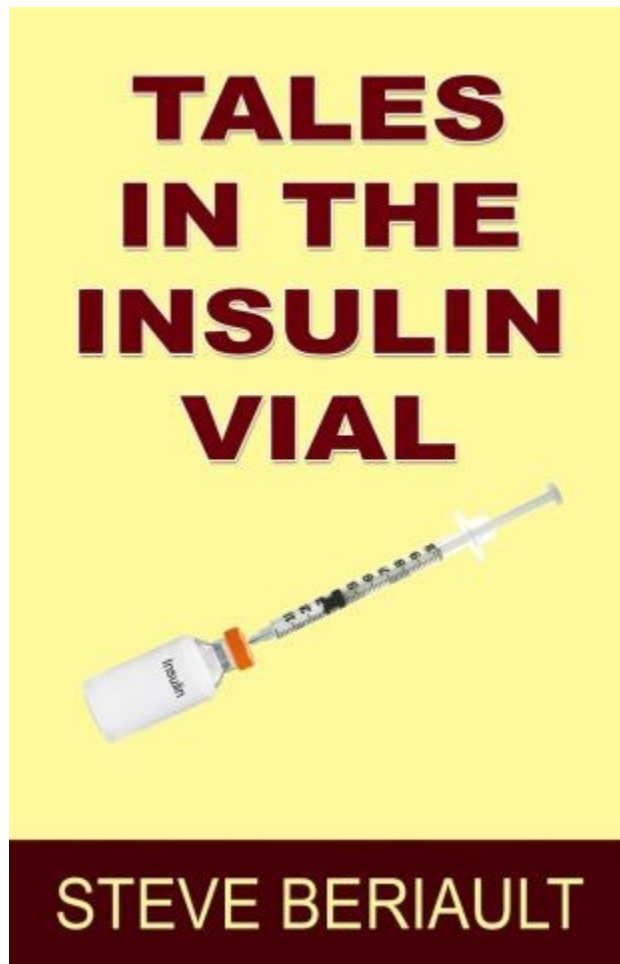



THE WESTERN STAR – Cornerbrook, Nfld/Labrador, Nov 27/2010

'Tales in the Insulin Vial': stories from the battle against diabetes



Published on November 27th, 2010 Darrell Squires 

Topics :

Cross-Canada , Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation , Wreck House Stretch.Does , Ontario , Canada , British Columbia

November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and a new book, “Tales in the Insulin Vial,” relates in intimate terms one man’s experiences living with Type 1 diabetes.

Some are written in the first-person, some in the third — these stories all relate the author’s journey and continual struggle against a “demon,” a fearsome, implacable enemy — diabetes.

It is so common we take diabetes for granted, never stopping, really to try and understand the suffering involved in living with it, and the severe physical toll it

can take. The purpose of this book is to shine a light of understanding on these issues.

Diagnosed with the condition at the age of two, Ontario native Steve Beriault has led a life defined by having Type 1 diabetes — and not at all in terms of giving in to this disease. His has been a very active life — even though, from early childhood, it meant daily insulin injections and endless consultations with medical professionals.

One of Beriault's proudest achievements is a cross-Canada cycling trip in the mid-1970s, undertaken when he was 23. Now in his late 50s, Beriault is a double amputee whose determination to fight his Type 1 diabetes is as strong as ever, and he is a dedicated fundraiser for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

As his book "Tales in the Insulin Vial" attests, diabetes didn't take Beriault's legs without him putting up a considerable fight. His steel legs are emblematic of a steel will.

As a small boy, Beriault kicked a diabetes physician in the leg twice, after he was critical and disrespectful toward his mother during an appointment. From kicking doctors, Beriault moved on to playing competitive football in high school — and he was fearless against opponents on and off the field.

In his early 20s, he became inspired to cycle across Canada — starting on June 6, 1975 in British Columbia, and arriving in St. John's on Aug. 1 — a journey of 7,700 kilometres. And since his point of arrival in Newfoundland was Port aux Basques, Beriault's cross-Canada trek included a trip across the island — an extremely tough journey in itself.

Beriault recalls being blown sideways on his bicycle by the cross winds in the Wreck House Stretch.

Does having Type 1 diabetes necessarily have to slow you down or force you to curtail your activities?

"Tales in the Insulin Vial" answers this with a clear "no."

But it also shows that with Type 1 diabetes things get tougher as you age. By his late 40s, Beriault's struggle with the condition got tougher with the onset of kidney and pancreatic failure, circulatory problems and diabetic ischemic leg disease.

It was the latter that would force removal of both Beriault's legs below the knee.

Despite failure of a subsequent pancreatic transplant, Beriault continues to fight — and continually fighting a debilitating illness is what this book is all about.

It's an ordinary person's firsthand and very personal account and reflections on how not to give up on life — even under the most trying circumstances.

Those with a serious illness of any kind, and especially those with diabetes — and the medical professionals working with them — will find inspiration and insight in Steve Beriault's "Tales in the Insulin Vial."

Ask for it at your public library.

Darrell Squires is assistant manager of Public Information and Library Resources Board, West Newfoundland-Labrador division. You can contact him at: dsquires@nlpl.ca or by phone at 634-7333. His column appears every other week.