Ignacio Almaguer

A Never Ending Fight

Ignacio Almaguer has not always had an easy health journey, but it is one that he still feels blessed for despite the hardships. Growing up, Ignacio loved to box, and wrestle, but as he got older, his body started to feel the wear and tear of years of training. In 2008 he was diagnosed with devastating news, Thyroid Cancer! This came as a shock, recalling the memory as "scary and nerve-wracking". On March 16, 2009, just a little over a year after his diagnosis, Ignacio would undergo a successful surgery to remove the cancer in his thyroid. As a result of this surgery, he was diagnosed with hypothyroidism – "Hypothyroidism happens when the thyroid gland doesn't make enough thyroid hormone" (mayoclinic.org). Due to this, he began to feel intense weight gain, fatigue, tiredness, and other effects. After overcoming both obstacles, one thing was clear to Ignacio, he needed to maintain routine checkups with his doctor every three months for blood work and listen to his body to dial in his medication needs.

In 2015-2016, Ignacio decided it was time to get back to doing what he loved most, going to the gym. He joined a local gym practicing jiujitsu and working out at least 2-3 times per week.

Despite the body aches and pains, he felt in his 40-year-old body, he tried to maintain a steady regimen of working out around his other obligatory duties. Fast forward to 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic hits, bringing with it uncertainty across not only the United States but the whole World. Ignacio felt it as well, sitting in his house for many days on end, not having access to his outlet to work out and practice his jiujitsu, the negative effects it had on his health started to become prevalent. He described never "truly liking cheese and crackers" before the pandemic, but after, he "loved them"!

Entering the pandemic in 2020, Ignacio was around 230lbs. After coming out of the pandemic in 2022, he was 285lbs. The first thing he did was go see his doctor in McAllen to get blood work run. The results came back, and he was diagnosed with metabolic syndrome – "Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions that occur together, increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes (mayoclinic.org). He had two options, get put on injectable insulin medication, or a new injectable to help with weight loss, Ozempic. Weighing his options and doing his research on each option, he chose to go with Ozempic – "Ozempic is a weekly injection that helps lower blood sugar by helping the pancreas make more insulin.

It is not approved for weight loss, but some physicians prescribe it to be used for weight loss" (health.ucdavis.edu). Before being put on this medication, Ignacio was consuming 4500 calories a day and was still hungry, due in large part to the fact that his insulin wasn't absorbing the sugars correctly. After taking the medication for a short period, he noticed instant results. He lost 20lbs, his knee pain went away, and he became more health conscious of what kinds of foods and nutrients his body needed.

In April of 2022, the craze for Ozempic across the US resulted in a shortage of medication. As a result, Ignacio's doctor offered to prescribe him another similar medication, Mounjaro – "Mounjaro is an injectable prescription medicine that is used along with diet and exercise to improve blood sugar (glucose) in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus" (mounjaro.com). In July of 2022, he started to notice positive effects of the medication, including significant weight loss. After dialing in his other thyroid medications and maintaining consistent checkups with his Doctor, Ignacio felt like he was at a good point in his life throughout the remainder of the 2022-2023 year. That is, until December hit.

In December 2023, Ignacio decided he would switch over to his wife's insurance plan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas. Little did he know that the insurance company would not cover the cost of the medications Ozempic or Mounjaro, stating that "it was only covered for patients who were diagnosed as Type 2 diabetics". Despite combating these claims and going back and forth with the insurance company, Ignacio has yet to receive the positive outcome he is hoping for. He feels like he has used the medication in the right way to turn around his metabolic syndrome diagnosis and reduce his prediabetes. As we concluded our conversation, Ignacio noted that he truly believes that these medications "can and will help you" if they're taken correctly in conjunction with a professional doctor's advice. We look forward to checking back in and seeing the outcome of this situation.

Sources:

mayoclinic.org
health.ucdavis.edu
mounjaro.com