

Powerful Patient #5

Host: Joyce Graff, WebTalkRadio.net

Living with Genetic Risk Factors

Nearly every day we are hearing about newly discovered **genetic risk factors** for cancer and other diseases.

If a condition seems to run in your family, you may wish to put together a Family Health Tree. This collection of information can help you see more clearly whether or how the condition may run in the family. It can also be useful in preparing for a visit with a genetic counselor or geneticist, who can help you interpret this information.



Keith Julian Richards, aka "Just Sayin"

In the family you will hear from in this show, there is a known genetic risk factor in Keith's mother's family. Keith, his mother, his aunt and uncle, and his grandfather all carry a tiny misspelling in one gene – one word in an entire book of instructions for making one protein in the body. This tiny flaw is enough to increase their risk of developing several kinds of tumors – eye, brain, spinal cord, kidney, and pancreas.

Once a risk factor like this has been identified in a family, it is important to communicate this information to other relatives, alerting them to this risk so that they too can watch out for early symptoms, identify problems early, and deal with them appropriately. This information sometimes "gets lost" between generations, as two occurrences of the problem might be 20 years apart.

With early detection and careful management, most such conditions can be managed quite well. But as you will hear from Keith and Kathy, you have to be an active participant in your health care.

1) Our Guests

Keith Julian Richards (aka Just Sayin') is a poet and Hip Hop artist from New York, winner of Martin Van Buren High School's Star Search Talent Show, and many other competitions, he now performs regularly in New York and is a regular guest on radio shows as an expert on popular culture. His "day job" is as a social worker with teenagers and families in New York City.

- See him on MySpace - justsayin718
- His CD's are available at www.cdbaby.com/cd/justsayin
- Read his story at <http://www.vhl.org/power>

- Keith is available by arrangement for performances, speaking engagements or radio/TV appearances.
- Write to him at keith.richards@vhl.org

Kathy Richards, Keith's mother, is recently retired from a business career. She and her husband have two grown children in their 20's. They have moved to a new home in North Carolina. Kathy's sister, Altheada LaVerne Johnson, is an active volunteer for the VHL Family Alliance, and heads the Information Hotline committee.

- Altheada's story can be found at <http://www.vhl.org/newsletter/vhl2005/05ddalth.htm>
- Write to Altheada at altheada@vhl.org

2) **About von Hippel-Lindau**

Von Hippel-Lindau (VHL) is a genetic cancer risk factor, raising the probability that you will get one or more tumors in your lifetime in one or more of the following areas of the body:

- Retina
- Brain
- Inner Ear
- Spinal cord
- Kidney
- Pancreas
- Adrenal glands

Depending which tumors grow, the symptoms will vary widely. Diagnosing a new case of VHL is quite difficult. If a family knows that there is some level of risk, it is important to communicate that information to other family members, and use that information to protect yourself and others by finding issues early, and treating them appropriately.

With early detection and careful management, people with VHL are living full and happy lives. Delayed diagnosis or inappropriate treatment can result in significant disability or death.

For information about VHL, see <http://www.vhl.org>, and especially the Handbook at <http://www.vhl.org/handbook> For the publication on compiling a *Family Health Tree*, see <http://www.vhl.org/power>

The quote from Dr. Phil about dealing with difficult emotions can be found at http://www.oprah.com/tows/pastshows/tows_past_20011002_c.jhtml , along with his Three Steps to begin healing, and Seven Suggestions to help you cope with difficult emotions.