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Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Week, 1985

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Myasthenia gravis is a harrowing neuromuscular disorder that enfeebles as many as 250,000 of our citizens, most of them in their prime years. It debilitates strength and destroys vigor. Extreme muscle weakness and abnormal fatigue weigh down its victims, sapping their ability to stand, to walk, to pick up a glass and drink from it, and—in critical cases—even to breathe.

Myasthenia gravis can strike anyone at any time. While its exact cause is unknown, scientists have found evidence that a chemical needed to stimulate muscle movement is somehow blocked, leaving muscles unable to contract. Such new knowledge suggests the possibility of one day preventing myasthenia gravis by replenishing the missing chemical and restoring the transmission of nerve impulses. To this end, scientists supported by the Federal government's National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke and by private voluntary groups—notably the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation, Inc., and the Muscular Dystrophy Association—are diligently investigating the basic neurological processes that underlie voluntary movement. Studies of immune system function are also underway to help scientists understand why myasthenia gravis patients seem more susceptible than others to infections.

Thanks to previous investigations, several drugs have been developed that can help many myasthenia gravis patients regain muscle strength and resume a fairly normal life. More research is needed, however, to find ways of liberating patients and their families from rigid medication schedules and from the side effects that accompany long-term drug use.

To acquaint the public with the tragedy of myasthenia gravis and the hope that research holds for eliminating this disorder, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 183, has designated the week of October 6, 1985, through October 12, 1985, as "Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning October 6, 1985, as Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Week. I call upon all government agencies, health organizations, communications media, and people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and tenth.

Ronald Reagan