
Shad Ireland: Hemodialysis Patient, Triathlon Participant

FMS spokesman's powerful message inspires and motivates

Start off with a brisk 2.4-mile swim; follow it with a 112-mile bicycle race; end up running a 26.2-mile marathon. That's called a triathlon, and most would also call it a pretty grueling day's work. And if that isn't daunting enough, do it all as someone who has been a hemodialysis patient for 25 years and survived two kidney transplants.

Perhaps it all sounds like science fiction, but it's an almost routine accomplishment for Shad Ireland—a remarkable man with a mission. Drawing on his own life story, Shad has built a career reassuring and motivating those who face what may seem insurmountable challenges in the pursuit of their personal goals. He recently signed up with FMS as a compensated spokesman and will be bringing his inspirational message to clinics in each of our 60 regions beginning this summer.

First diagnosed with chronic kidney disease (CKD) at the age of ten, Shad struggled through two failed kidney transplants, the second leading to associated respiratory distress syndrome. He lost 70 pounds and, at one point, was given 24 hours to live. A lesser person might have simply given up—but not Shad.

“I Can Do That”

Soon after recovering from his ordeal, Shad was viewing TV coverage of an Ironman championship in Hawaii and marveling at what seemed the almost

superhuman athletic feats of the participants. Suddenly he said to himself, “I can do that.” And it turned out that he could. By combining relentless determination with improved physical condition, he was able to complete the Lake Placid (N.Y.) Ironman® triathlon in 2003, a scant year after beginning his training for the event. With this amazing accomplishment, he became the first dialysis patient ever to compete in, and complete, a triathlon.

Today, at the age of 35, Shad continues his grueling workouts with an eye towards continuing to participate in triathlons, which he does regularly. He undergoes hemodialysis four times a week for about five hours per treatment at his home in Minnesota with the help of his wife, Roxanne.

But Shad hasn’t been content just to rest on his remarkable athletic laurels. In 2006, he founded Team Ireland, which sponsors as many as two dozen candidates of various athletic abilities who want to participate in triathlons. Some of the candidates are male, some are female. Some are healthy, some are challenged.

But all share one characteristic: a passion for taking on, and doing their best in, the demanding three-stage event. And Shad and his team are on hand to bolster their confidence—to provide them with the motivation that will spur them on to success. In the words of Team Ireland’s motto, “No limitations, only inspiration.”

Raising Awareness, Bringing Inspiration

Team Ireland’s members promote speaking engagements, fundraising events, and participation in races throughout North America. Their ultimate goals are twofold: to help raise public awareness of CKD and other chronic diseases, and to bring a

message of inspiration to people who need to know that they are not struggling alone—and that through persistence and determination, they can attain personal goals that sometimes seem out of reach.

At the Team Ireland Web site, www.ironshad.com, you'll find extensive information about the program and many other related activities. There's biographical information about Shad, a schedule of upcoming triathlons in various locations around the country, plus audio and video clips, press releases, a schedule of speaking events, a list of renal resources, and much more.

As if all these activities weren't enough to keep him occupied, Shad also operates the Shad Ireland Foundation, which supports CKD patients who want to improve their physical fitness or work toward educational goals. You'll find their Web site at www.shadirelandfoundation.org.

Shad's uncompromising credo is posted on the home page of the Team Ireland Web site: "I am an individual who is passionate about life, who is motivated by challenges, and who is committed to the inspiration of my fellow patients. I am an individual who is beating the odds by turning obstacles into achievements and celebrating every breath along the way.

"I am an individual who has accepted, and is successfully living with kidney disease and all of the experiences that go along with this diagnosis."

In the final analysis, Shad Ireland is out to prove that people with chronic illnesses don't have to surrender to their condition—that they can overcome their challenges and "cross their own personal finish line." To find out when Shad will

be visiting your region this summer, go to the FMCNA Web site. You'll want to hear his powerful message and convey it to your patients—especially those in need of extra reassurance.

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