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National Tourette Syndrome Awareness Week, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Tourette syndrome is a little-understood neurological disorder characterized by compulsive repetitive behaviors. Tic-like grimacing, shoulder-shrugging, sniffing, grunting, and coughing are common symptoms of the disorder; less frequent but perhaps more alarming symptoms include uncontrollable vocalizations, head-banging, and other involuntary self-destructive actions.

An estimated 100,000 Americans have Tourette syndrome to a noticeable degree. Those with tic disorders may number as high as 3.5 million. Symptoms appear in childhood, between the ages of 2 and 16 years, and wax and wane over time but do not seem to become progressively worse. Males are three times more likely to have the disorder than females.

Within the Federal government, the search for answers to why people get Tourette syndrome and what is behind its puzzling symptoms is led by the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke (NINCDS). Research teams at NINCDS and grantee institutions, together with scientific colleagues in the private sector, are tracing and analyzing the suspected genetic basis for the syndrome. Aided by increasingly sophisticated techniques of brain imaging, they are determining the significance in Tourette patients of unusually low amounts of certain brain chemicals, called neurotransmitters, and investigating anatomical structures within the brain that may be affected. They are testing new drugs to control symptoms without causing depression and other serious side effects.

Crucial to the national research effort is the cooperation of patients with Tourette syndrome and their families, especially those allied with the Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc. This voluntary health agency provides advice and encouragement to patients coping not only with exhausting and painful physical problems, but also with the attendant damaging social and emotional problems. Because they cannot predict or control the vocalizations or movements that periodically overtake them, people with Tourette can be easy targets of misunderstanding and rejection. The Tourette Syndrome Association plays an essential role in educating the public about the disorder and about building acceptance and respect for those who refuse to allow the disorder to diminish their lives or restrict their contributions to society.

To further enhance public awareness of Tourette syndrome, the Congress, by Public Law 100-145, has designated the week of November 2 through November 8, 1987, as "National Tourette Syndrome Awareness Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of that week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of November 2 through November 8, 1987, as National Tourette Syndrome Awareness Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe that week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan