**Sometime You Just Have to Suck It Up**

The Struggles, Benefits and Wisdoms of Type 1 Diabetes

“It’s a hard knock life,” Mike Wallman said, smugly aware of the device recording his voice. He sat a Barlow cafeteria table with disheveled hair and a childish face that didn’t reflect his sixteen years age. He had a wide smile with his hands on the table, thumbs twiddling eagerly for the day ahead.

     He was scrawny five-foot-four with a high voice desperately wanting to drop. His hair held in a stiff attempt to be stylish, but ended up failing him. A sly joke from his friends makes him giggle; exposing his braces. He wore a maroon windbreaker with black sweatpants and Nike sneakers. He looked like the average kid, but lurking in the background of life was the daily burden of living with Type 1 diabetes.

“It’s like a standard day. I get up, take a shower and then I prick my arm.” It was a standard procedure for a teen with this disease. “Then I eat some food. You know, whatever, maybe a waffle or something.” As long as he paid attention to his numbers, it would be normal day.

According to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund (JDRF), 1.25 million Americans are living with Type 1 diabetes including about 200,000 youth (less than 20 years old) and over a million adults (20 years old and older). Another 40,000 people are diagnosed each year in the U.S. (Type 1).

The lunch table friends around Mike attempted to soil the recording by cursing or saying obscene sentences. “I normally go through like,” there was a pause to think, “six units a day.”

“What’s a unit?” Nathaniel, his friend interjected from across the table.

“It’s, it’s...” the question had caught him off guard.

“Is it like a milligram?” Nathaniel pursued an answer.

“Yeah, that sounds right, I guess.” Mike informs him. These units of insulin keep Mike acting like himself. Without them his sugar levels would go up and down uncontrollably. This could make him feel low energy or high energy depending on the level. “The insulin is expensive too. It’s like an Epi-Pen but I don’t get that rush. It’s so expensive because one guy owns the whole insulin industry.” He let out a chuckle in the name of American monopoly. “Yeah, it has gone up by like 400% or something.”

Mike is part of a test group for new insulin product that is constantly measuring his blood levels. “It’s f\*\*king annoying though,” he says in agony, “It beeps all the time.” It beeps in order to alert him of problems with his levels. The product is helpful despite these irritations. “It helps out because I can more regularly know what my numbers are. I also get paid.” A smug expression leapt onto his face.

“You get paid? How much?” blurted Frank who sat on his right.

“A solid fifty bucks per visit.” It almost made having the disease better.

“But, life goes on. There’s nothing I can do about it so, I guess I just suck it up.” These wise words caused the table to silence as Mike added, “In this world full of [pansies] sometimes you just gotta suck it up. You know, sometimes I complain but most of the time I joke around because that’s just how life is.”

This wisdom can only come from someone with a disease. They see life with a lens so different from the many folk. And even though Mike is only sixteen, wisdom has been brought to him by genetic injustice.

**Works Cited**

"Type 1 Diabetes Facts." JDRF. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2017.