

**Patient Biography:  
Brenda Blackburn**

Brenda Blackburn is a personal and professional development facilitator in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada and a member of the North American Thrombosis Forum Advocacy Committee.

Ms. Blackburn was diagnosed with deep vein thrombosis in June of 2008. Her symptoms began as cramp-like pain in her right calf, which she quickly dismissed as a pulled muscle. For two weeks, Ms. Blackburn dealt with discomfort and difficulty moving about, but believed the “pulled muscle” would work itself out.

Just prior to a cross-country flight, Ms. Blackburn sought advice from her doctor to be sure there was nothing more she could do to ease her leg pain. Upon hearing her symptoms and examining Ms. Blackburn’s now slightly swollen leg, the doctor diagnosed her with DVT. She was then directed to the nearest hospital for an immediate ultrasound. Five hours of tests and procedures confirmed the diagnosis of DVT and revealed a clot stretching from above Ms. Blackburn’s knee to her ankle.

Following her diagnosis, Ms. Blackburn began treatment at the Burnaby Hospital Outpatient Anticoagulation Program involving a daily INR reading, warfarin injections, and a series of extensive tests, including a pulmonary function test, CT head Scan, CT angiogram, and follow-up ultrasound. Ms. Blackburn’s angiogram revealed that she did in fact suffer a small pulmonary embolism in her lower lung.

In September of 2009, Ms. Blackburn tested positive for Factor V Leiden and was diagnosed with thrombophilia. In addition to having this unidentified risk factor at the time of her DVT, Ms. Blackburn had been over forty years of age and still taking birth control pills, though unaware of the potential risk to her health. Ms. Blackburn is no longer receiving warfarin anticoagulation therapy but continues to take heightened precautions against DVT.

Like many people faced with a diagnosis of DVT, Ms. Blackburn initially was not familiar with the disease or its potentially fatal complications, though she quickly understood the risks well enough to fear for her life. Ms. Blackburn’s experience has made her a tireless advocate for DVT awareness and education. In Canada, she has founded the DVT Support Group of the Lower Mainland. Ms. Blackburn is also an active member of NATF’s Advocacy Committee and frequently collaborates on education initiatives.