

## Canada-U.S. Blog

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING CANADA-U.S. CROSS BORDER TRADE

# People With Graves Disease Should Be Careful At the Border

By Cyndee Todgham Cherniak on August 23rd, 2015

Posted in Border Security, Customs Law, Personal Comments

I have Graves Disease. One of the not-so-fun symptoms is Graves' Ophthalmopathy. Some of the symptoms of Graves' Ophthalmopathy are (a) inflammation/swelling of the eyes, (b) dryness/redness of the eyes and (c) eyelids do not retract quickly. So, the customs officers see big red irritated eyes and think the worst (drugs). Based on my personal experience, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers and U.S. Customs officers generally have never heard of Graves Disease and those who have know about the hyperthyroidism only and not the Ophthalmopathy.

Customs officers may stop a person with Graves Disease and may make inaccurate assumptions when applying the risk criteria.

No person has a right to not be examined by customs. But, every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. It helps to wear a medical alert bracelet that indicates you have Graves Disease (but I have been told by a CBSA officer that I could have bought it on the internet and may not really have any disease). This bracelet is more helpful when traveling abroad to foreign countries.

While the CBSA can be insulting, what is important is one's reaction to the insults. I cannot control what another person says. I cannot control what another person does. I can only control my reaction to what another person says and does.

- 1) I tell the CBSA officer where to find my prescription medications in my bag;
- 2) I ask the CBSA officer to write in their notes that the passenger (or suspect) indicated "She has Graves Disease; and
- 3) I let the CBSA officer do their job as I know that the examination will be non-resultant.

If, and only if the CBSA officer becomes too abusive in his/her language, I would ask for a supervisor to be consulted. There is no need to escalate the situation. I can keep my cool and I can let the CBSA officer do his or her job. Remember the playground saying "sticks and stones can break your bones, but words will not hurt me."

Know that you are the better person for giving a person who knows less about your disease a pass.

Tags: Graves Disease, Ophthalmopathy

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