



Film

Starting the conversation

The Celiac Project
 Directed by Michael Frolichstein
 57 min, 2015
www.celiacproject.com

83% of people with coeliac disease in the USA are misdiagnosed or undiagnosed: a startling statistic for one of the world's wealthiest countries.

Michael Frolichstein, director of *The Celiac Project* and founder of the online community of the same name, was diagnosed with coeliac disease at age 40 years after struggling with mystery ailments through childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. With the aim of raising awareness about the disease, Frolichstein collaborated with several coeliac disease centres and hospitals in the USA and bloggers and campaigners for awareness of the disease to create this documentary and start the conversation.

The documentary intersplices testimonies from doctors and specialists in coeliac disease, with shocking stories

from patients of their struggle to find the correct diagnosis, and their sometimes harrowing emotional and physical journeys on the way to a startlingly simple treatment. The film gives an up-to-date perspective on the disease itself, with simple and informative animations to explain its mechanism, and fresh first-person insight into the long-term consequences, multifaceted nature, and heterogeneity of the disease and the population who can be affected.

Between all the many interviews with people with the disease, bloggers, dietitians, and doctors, Frolichstein adds a personal touch to the film. We are introduced to his wife and daughter—who, at age 3 years, was diagnosed with coeliac disease—and his three nephews, who are followed in the film while they are tested for the genetic marker for the disease. We are taken on a journey from simple blood test, to consultation, endoscopy, and a final confirmation of diagnosis. Frolichstein illustrates how simple the whole process can be, and, if one is open to it, how you can adapt your life to take on board the simple changes needed to avert long-term damage, including cancer and neurological disorders.

The positive message of *The Celiac Project* cannot be denied. An engaging and heart-warming look at the coeliac disease community, Frolichstein has definitely started the conversation. Both engaging and enlightening, this unique documentary is sure to raise awareness among people who might be unfamiliar with the disease, and to strengthen the coeliac disease community.

Jessica E Dwyer



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