



Dr. Klimas is pictured above (center photo) with patient Marly Silverman

Champion for Change

Dr. Nancy Klimas keeps hope alive for sufferers of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Words and photos by Marla E. Schwartz

Those who suffer from the debilitating effects of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)/Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), Fibromyalgia (FMS), and Gulf War Syndrome (GWS) live in a continuous state of bone-aching pain and relentless fatigue that make everyday life a constant battle for survival. Many of these individuals suffer in silence because such diseases are not looked on with a tolerant eye by much of modern medicine.

So where are the physicians who go to bat for these people? They do exist. Indeed, one is right here in Miami and her name is **Dr. Nancy G. Klimas**. She is a brave, soft-spoken, articulate woman with a keen sense of humor who is dedicated to helping her patients. For the past few years she has seen a massive amount of people who suffer from these illnesses, and a testament to her skills is that her waiting list for new patients is one year long. This energetic and enthusiastic physician also finds time to be a parent to three young women on her ranch south of Miami.

Klimas is employed at the **University of Miami School of Medicine**, and all of her numerous academic appointments were earned in Florida. She recently returned from

a trip to Washington, DC, where she met with **Dr. Julie Geberding**, the Director of the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, to help create a CFS Awareness Campaign along with a public service announcement about this illness.

"Dr. Geberding deserves to be praised for her efforts in this campaign," Klimas said. "She is always grateful and thankful to people for all of their help." Geberding has reorganized the Center in an effort to help focus on CFS and other illnesses.

Closer to home, Klimas was a keynote speaker at the 8th Annual IACFS Conference on CFS, FMS, GWS, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, and other related illnesses, which recently took place in Ft. Lauderdale, and the event was sold-out. Organized by **Marly Silverman**, founder and director of **PANDORA**, the Patient Alliance for Neuroendocrine/Immune Disorders Organization for Research and Advocacy (pandoranet.info) exists to help patients and their physicians understand these illnesses. Klimas is on the board of this organization in an advisory role.

Klimas became interested in doing work on behalf of CFS/FMS patients by way of her

appointment as Director of AIDS Research and Co-Director of the AIDS Clinical Research Unit at the VA Medical Center. "I wrote and received a grant from the VA's central office and this put the University of Miami on the map in terms of becoming a multi-disciplinary program, thus leading the way to conducting CFS research," Klimas explained.

"CFS is hard to describe to those who don't have the illness," she pointed out. "The closest way I can describe to understanding the fatigue is when I have jet-lag after returning from an overseas trip," she said. In 1986, Klimas saw her first CFS patient. "The priority for everyone working to treat and find a cure for CFS is to work better at our roles," she said. "We all want more effective therapy and preventative measures to take place."

"I'm optimistic about the future of research in this field. This is an opportunistic time from the point of view of research and clinical advances in this area of expertise, and for years it hasn't been this way," said Dr. Klimas. Clearly this tide change is welcome and it's certainly past the time when those who suffer from these nefarious illnesses be treated with respect. ■■■