**qual test**

*Sep 9, 2025 | 11:00 AM | R01 Transcript*

Date: September 9, 2025

Time: 11:00 AM

**Moderator:** Samantha, my name is Nancy. It's so nice to meet you.

**Respondent:** Nice to meet you.

**Moderator:** How are you doing today?

**Respondent:** Good.

**Moderator:** Good. Before we begin, I just want to give you a quick introduction. I really appreciate you joining today, and we're going to be talking all about SMA and SMA treatment in particular. Everything you say today is completely confidential. I don't even know your last name, so let's just keep it that way. Please try not to mention the name of any doctors involved in the SMA treatment. I do have a few colleagues listening in. They don't know who you are either, and we're recording just for research purposes. If by any chance you mention that you've had a less than ideal experience on a medication my client makes, I have to write up a little report called an adverse event report, and I might have a few questions to ask you about that. Also, I think you agreed to give seventy-five minutes of your time. Is that correct?

**Respondent:** Yes, ma'am.

**Moderator:** So even though that seems like a really long time, every once in a while, I might need to interrupt just to hustle things along because I have a ton of questions. Are you okay with all that?

**Respondent:** Yes, ma'am.

**Moderator:** Will you tell me, are you the person who has SMA, or are you a caregiver of someone who has SMA?

**Respondent:** I have SMA.

**Moderator:** You have SMA? Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, if you live with anybody else, how you spend your days, just so I have a sense of who you are?

**Respondent:** Sure. I live with my children and my husband, and we have two dogs. I work part-time for a local school, and I am enrolled in school to earn my bachelor's. I do all the other daily things in between.

**Moderator:** That's a lot going on. How old are your kids?

**Respondent:** I've got 19, 17, and 15.

**Moderator:** Wow. You're full on. I have one 16-year-old and two 14-year-olds, so just behind you. What do you do when you work part-time for the local school district?

**Respondent:** I work at the front desk. When the kids come in late or need to check out, I ensure that they're safely checked in or out and then input some data into the system, whether it be attendance or other various things that are assigned.

**Moderator:** That's great. And amazing you're getting your bachelor's. What are you majoring in? These are just nosy questions, but it helps me get to know you a little bit.

**Respondent:** You're good. I've got my associates in medical coding and billing, and medical office admin, so I thought it'd be fun to get my bachelor's in human resource management.

**Moderator:** I mean, there's a lot of detail in both. Right? A lot of systems stuff. Even though I think about HR as people-focused, it's a lot of systems too. So when your type is Type 3 SMA, is that right?

**Respondent:** Yes, ma'am.

**Moderator:** Okay. And when were you diagnosed with SMA?

**Respondent:** October 2012.

**Moderator:** Wow. I never asked you how old you are. How old are you?

**Respondent:** I'm 43.

**Moderator:** So interesting. You were diagnosed at, like, 30 years old?

**Respondent:** Mhmm.

**Moderator:** Wow. How did the diagnosis come about?

**Respondent:** Our pastor's wife is a physical therapist. She noticed my gait and told me I needed to see a neurologist. They tested me for a couple of things, and one of our friend's daughters actually has SMA Type 0 or 1, and something told me to get tested for it. I had never really heard about it, didn't know anything about it. But when the testing came back negative for MS and a couple of other things, I just said, hey, test me for this.

**Moderator:** The upsetting part of that story is that it wasn't part of the panel of original things they tested you for. If you hadn't asked...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Moderator:** What a remarkable physical therapist to know that you should see a neurologist.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Just watching me walk on Sundays and the little bit of interaction we had, she said there's something going on with your gait. You need to get in, and so I did.

**Moderator:** So all the testing came back negative, and then you said to the neurologist, what was the reaction when you said, actually, I want to get tested for SMA?

**Respondent:** He was pretty open to it, but he wasn't very well-versed on it. He had to do some research. I was sent to a muscular dystrophy clinic in another town once I got diagnosed to help me learn some more about it. He was very limited in his research. Basically, what he found on the Internet is what he knew.

**Moderator:** Sorry. I don't know why I just giggled, but it's just intense. Had you been seeing a physical therapist or had your own physical therapist before the interaction with the pastor's wife?

**Respondent:** I had seen a doctor. I had some lower back pain, and they called it a limp at the time. They were attributing it to maybe childbirth. I'd had my third child by then, and they wanted to do an epidural to block some of the nerves and the pain. I didn't have it done. My husband was in the military, so we moved, and when we got to our new duty station, I was going to try to continue care there, but she intervened before then. I just chalked it up to maybe gaining some more weight because I was always really thin before kids. I lost my ability to run. I was slowly noticing a few other symptoms, but not being knowledgeable, I just chalked them up to being fifty pounds heavier than I had ever been.

**Moderator:** Wow. 50 pounds is a big change.

**Respondent:** Mhmm. So I just thought my weight was causing some of my issues. Maybe I was too heavy for my body frame or something like that.

**Moderator:** It's so interesting. Somebody attributed it to childbirth. You're like, oh, let's just chalk it all up to childbirth.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yep.

**Moderator:** It's just a female problem.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Moderator:** How did you feel when you were diagnosed? What was that like?

**Respondent:** It was a little bit scary. I didn't know much about SMA as a whole. I only knew what I had seen in our friend's daughter. I had to dive in and try to research. Obviously, I was scared. I have three young kids. I'm married. What is my life going to look like? My biggest fear was, are my kids affected?

**Moderator:** Oh, what do you mean? Can you say more about that?

**Respondent:** I was worried if my kids would have SMA, just part of processing it all.

**Moderator:** Was there a genetic thing that...

**Respondent:** Mhmm.