



Apple TV Star Andrea Dalzell Fought Transverse Myelitis to Become a Nurse

Cure advocate [Andrea Dalzell](#) was diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis at the age of 5, but growing up in a wheelchair didn't stop her from pursuing a career in healthcare or becoming a star in Apple commercials! She shares her story below with the [CURE NATION](#).

Anyone who has the pleasure of meeting Andrea Dalzell will not soon forget her contagious smile, soft New York accent, and strong, confident presence. She's a disability advocate and served her home state as Ms. Wheelchair NY in 2015.



At 31 years old, she has recently succeeded in earning a degree that will enable her to work in medicine and she's at the beginning of a bright career. Getting to this point, however, required

a whole lot of focus, determination and self-efficacy.

Although she was diagnosed at 5, Andrea didn't lose the ability to walk completely until she was 12 years old. Throughout her childhood, she was forced to endure many painful surgeries and uncomfortable procedures related to her disability.

It wasn't easy, but she was not about to let it all defeat her. By the time she hit high school, Andrea had made up her mind that she would blaze her own path.

She vowed that using a wheelchair would not stand in the way of the things she wanted in life.



"I didn't want to not be accepted, so I went out there and did what I wanted to do."

Andrea also decided that she would pursue a career which would enable her to support others with disabilities and hopefully reduce some of the negative experiences she had with doctors and hospitals. "At first," Andrea recalls, "I wanted to become a lawyer to come back and punish the doctors for all the pain I had to endure. But, later, in high school, I decided I could become a doctor to change the way people approached healthcare."

Andrea Dalzell Pursues a Career in Healthcare

Andrea dedicated herself to her education and obtained her first two degrees in Biology and Neuroscience at the College of Staten Island. Her next step was to begin auditing some medical school classes to get an idea of what she would be expecting, and to her surprise, she hated it. Something significant occurred to Andrea that would change the course of her journey.

"I realized, doctors treat the disease and nurses treat the person. I never wanted to treat a person like they were a disease. So, I decided to switch paths and apply for nursing school."

"I picked the same college where I got my first two degrees, College of Staten Island. There's a pre-test for nursing and they base the rest on grades. By sticking with this school, I wouldn't

have to do an interview and chance someone possibly discriminating because of disability," Andrea explained.



In the spring of 2016, Andrea got accepted to nursing school. The first gathering was a mandatory orientation, which if missed, could delay students an entire semester before beginning the program.

When she arrived, she was approached by a man who was the director of the program and also one of the lead faculty members. Immediately, he and others shared their concerns about Andrea being able to complete the requirements of the nursing program (or even the tasks of a nurse in general).

Their concerns were such that they asked Andrea to leave the orientation so they could discuss the matter further, in private, and not distract from the orientation.

Luckily, Andrea was aware of her rights and she didn't scare easily.



She knew that if she missed the orientation, that they would have actual grounds to delay her starting the program. So, she informed them that she was protected under the ADA and had every right to be there, and also reminded them that the school was required to make reasonable accommodations.

After meeting with the disability services office on campus, the school didn't try to interrupt Andrea's attendance or participation in the nursing program again. But, she knew to perform all the tasks of a nurse, some of them life-saving, would require creative thinking and a whole lot of endurance. She was up for the challenge.



photo courtesy of United Spinal Association

Andrea Takes up Boxing to Build Strength

One of the most important duties of a nurse is to have the ability to perform CPR. Andrea knew it wouldn't be easy for someone with paralysis, so she picked up a new hobby to build the necessary strength.

“I took up boxing so I could properly perform CPR, and I got certified. Next, I had to prove that I could handle a patient in a hospital setting – and I was able to do that, too.”

Andrea says her peers were incredibly supportive and encouraging throughout the nursing program, and they can attest that they didn't have to help her too much. She feels like there's a positive shift happening in the nursing community right now where professionals are coming into the field with open minds and not as attached to traditional medical settings.



Andrea Becomes a Registered Nurse

In January of this year, Andrea received her associate's degree in nursing and in February passed her NCLEX Boards. **She is the first registered nurse who uses a wheelchair in New York City and possibly in the entire state.**

In fact, there are only about 20 registered nurses who use wheelchairs in the whole country. While teaching was an option for her right out of school, she was eager to dive right into patient care.

"I wanted the bedside because I feel like I understand that disability can come off as a death sentence. If you can be that one person that comes into a room and can change someone's mindset about that, you give them a whole new will to live."

Andrea recently accepted her first nursing position as a summer camp nurse and she couldn't be more excited. "I'll be the Live-In Director of Nursing, where I'll have the chance to serve children and adults with special needs. I'll be there for 15 weeks and get all kinds of experience that I would get on the floor of a hospital. It's important to build a solid, diverse foundation for a nursing career."



Andrea's Career Advice for Women Who Roll

From her heart, Andrea shared, "Honestly, I was scared. I'm still scared. With nursing, you can study and practice and prepare, but we never know really what to expect until we're in the situation. But, we can't let fear stop us from doing what we want to do."

If you're just starting out in pursuit of your dream, Andrea reminds us that we don't have to take it all on at once. She says, "You can take baby steps, and with the Internet, we can reach out to communities for support. You can find anyone on social media that could help or that has been in your situation. Find a message board or group, post a question. Start somewhere."

Some careers, like nursing, can seem intimidating or unattainable to someone who uses a wheelchair because of the physical demands, but that doesn't mean they're out of reach. You may have to fight some battles, change some perceptions and possibly shed a few tears, but if you can commit to being your own best advocate, you can succeed.

"If anyone else feels like they want to reach something that they don't know if they can reach, like I once felt, just try. And never listen if someone tells you no."



Apple Features Andrea Dalzell and the Apple Watch

Last year, Apple reached out to Andrea after she had been featured in a social media campaign for body image, as well as a fashion show. "They asked me to participate in a commercial for the [Apple Watch](#) about how the fitness feature supported my boxing and physical training," Andrea remembered.

Recently, Apple contacted Andrea again to invite her to give a talk on the ways her Apple Watch has helped her through nursing school and in her career as a nurse. On May 17th, she gave the talk at Apple Williamsburg for Global Accessibility Awareness Day (#GAAD).

VIDEO: APPLE iWATCH FOR ANDREA DALZELL

If you're a wheelchair user who's curious about the Apple Watch, check out some of Andrea's favorite features:



- Health benefits – being able to track workouts (specific to wheelchairs) and monitor heart rate, which can help manage dysreflexia
- Being hands free when you roll – just glance at your watch between pushes to monitor calls, texts, emails, reminders

- Siri feature in the watch to schedule reminders, set appointments, make calls and more, on the go
- Ability to make a call right from watch if phone is out of reach (i.e. falling out of wheelchair)
- "Time To Roll" feature reminds us to move, but also serves as a reminder to use restroom, stretch, etc.

Andrea is an Advocate for Cure Medical as a user and as a Nurse too

We all want to use medical supplies that are best for our bodies and overall health. But, for Andrea, it goes beyond her personal need to be happy with her own experience. She says, "As a nurse, I had to start caring about the medical supplies I was using, so I could be in the best position to suggest products to patients. Often, we're not taught to be big advocates about our own bodies and the products we use, plus we aren't usually screened enough."



Cure catheters are not made with DEHP, BPA or natural rubber latex.

When it comes to choosing her medical supplies, Andrea feels an obligation to be thoroughly knowledgeable about all available products – not just for her own well-being, but so she can also be in the best position to inform her patients.

That's why Andrea was so glad she discovered catheters made by Cure Medical, which aren't made with scary chemicals like DEHP, BPA and Natural Rubber Latex.

Cure catheters are made with polished eyelets for maximum comfort and come in a variety of lengths and tip-styles. The look and convenience of Cure's products are a big plus for Andrea, too.



"I am currently loving the [Cure Twist](#). It's so easy to use and throw away. And, besides, the packaging is pretty!"

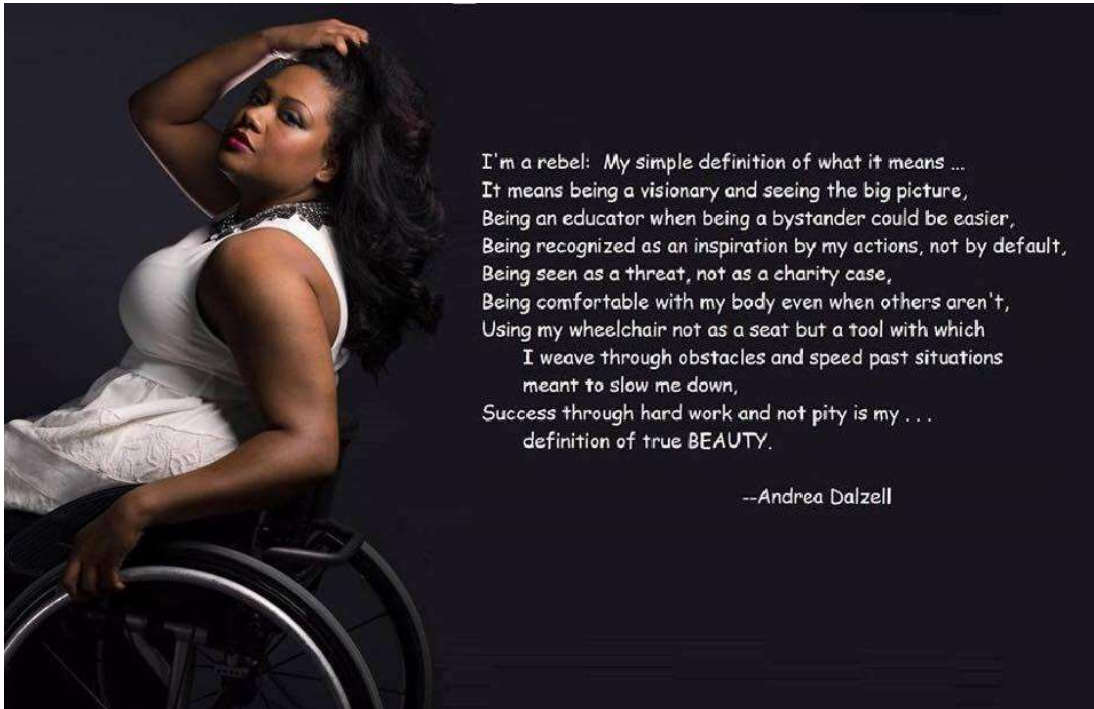


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To request free samples of the Cure Twist® or any Cure Medical catheter, contact your local distributor of quality healthcare products, or [click here](#).

Andrea also appreciates [the Cure Commitment](#) and the fact that Cure Medical cares so much about the quality of life of their customers and community.

"A lot of companies that sell to us forget us, but they wouldn't have a business without us," Andrea expressed. "I think the Cure Commitment is amazing."



Can you imagine a cure for SCI/D? We can.

That's why Cure Medical donates 10% of our net income to medical research. We believe [research is the key to developing a cure](#) for urinary retention, [spinal cord injury](#) and central nervous system disorders. Simply by choosing to use Cure products, you are contributing to a more promising future by supporting research for finding a cure.



Cure Medical founder Bob Yant was paralyzed in a diving accident. He has dedicated his life to serving others who have paralysis and urinary retention.

We understand SCI/D personally, as Cure Medical was created by Bob Yant, who is a C4/5 quadriplegic. We work hard to design our products with your needs in mind.

At Cure Medical, we have a vested interest in the quality, safety, comfort and convenience of our products— as our founder's health depends on them, too.

[Cure Catheters and Cure Closed Systems](#) are not only safe and comfortable, but familiar as they work just like any other intermittent catheter.



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