2 - D: Case Study 2 - I woke up like this

I woke up one morning and immediately noticed a deep and intense pain in my left knee. As I rolled out of bed and put my feet on the ground, the pain spiked. I mentally checked where I was on the pain scale. An eight, right? Yes, an eight. My wife was out of town so I was on my own to figure out what to do next. I hobbled to the edge of the stairs and managed to sit and then slide down, stair-by-stair, to the main level of my house.

I grabbed my good quad-footed cane to take as much weight off as I could–I have hypermobile Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, so I'm prepared for these moments. I hobbled to the couch and sat down with my leg up. Now to start googling: Left inner knee pain. The internet suggested an MCL tear or torn meniscus. I had to think carefully now. Do I call a ride and go to urgent care? If I do, what will be the next step? They will take an X-ray and nothing will show up, because though it is dense, this type of connective tissue doesn't show up on an X-ray. If the physician is a little more savvy they might check the function of the knee to see if it is an MCL tear. But even that will be hard for them to determine. So, I will likely be referred to an orthopedic surgeon. Been there, done that. The surgeon probably won't know anything about my connective tissue disease. Or maybe they won't believe that I could have torn my meniscus in my sleep. Most people tear their meniscus doing sports; I just woke up like this. In anycase, they will probably recommend physical therapy. And, if that doesn't work, maybe they will consider surgery. But probably not in my case, because I'm fat [link to weight stigma module]. Physical Therapy is my best bet. And, I already see a PT regularly.

So, I checked my calendar. My next appointment is in two weeks. Can I wait until then and just work with my regular PT? I swallow as much ibuprofen as is recommended and cancel my meetings for the day, figuring it is probably best to wait it out. I know how to manage pain. The next day, the pain is a little better, but still severe. And the day after that, the same. When I finally see my physical therapist, I'm still using the cane, still in severe pain. The PT evaluates my knee and gives his best guess: torn meniscus. He agrees to help me, and agrees that seeing an orthopedic surgeon probably won't get me anything other than a referral to see … him. But he cautions it will take upwards of six months to heal before we can begin rehabilitation exercises. I've got hEDS. I've torn cartilage before, unfortunately. A podiatrist treated the broken cartilage in my toe a number of years before I got diagnosed with hEDS. I know it takes a long time to heal. Here we go again!

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