

June 2010

Atrial Fibrillation My story by Ann R

It started on holiday in Bournemouth late August 1999; I was getting out of breath after walking only a few yards, I thought this might be due to a chest infection. When seeing a doctor on return I was given an ECG and sent to hospital for checks and diagnosed with paroxysmal Atrial Fibrillation, as they thought I was quite young for this only 44 [although not uncommon.] I stayed in hospital for three days.

I was given tablets and my heart stayed irregular so I was treated with a Cardioversion. I have had six Cardioversions from 1999 to 2007 the longest lasting in sinus rhythm two years and the shortest only 1-2 weeks.

My Cardiologist then referred me to Leicester Glenfield to an EP [Electrophysiologist] for a WACA [Wide area circumferential ablation] I had a further Cardioversion in June 2008 but it was not in sinus rhythm at the time of the procedure five months later. The first attempt at the WACA was not successful as the EP couldn't see enough to get through the veins in the atrium and so another appointment was made in February this time the procedure would be performed under general anaesthetic using a TOE [Transoesophageal echo], so he could see from the back of my heart. The ablation was made more difficult due to a quite large left atrium [I think they call this a hokum?], also I have a heart murmur and a leaky mitral valve which was detected twenty years ago.

The WACA this time was successful, it took five hours and I was dehydrated due to the anaesthetic and length of the procedure. My mouth and throat were sore from the camera down the throat, but I quickly recovered. I had three Echocardiograms to check the fluid around my heart had not changed and an X-ray to look at the back of my heart

The EP was very skilled and I had every faith in his judgement and decisions. I feel very privileged to have been offered this treatment and cannot thank the team of doctors and nurses enough.

After my ablation I developed an Atrial flutter and had a further Cardioversion in July 2009, since then my heart has been in sinus rhythm and I have felt very well indeed and have been discharged from Leicester, quite a relief as it was a long way to travel to appointments. I am continuing to take amiodarone and warfarin and probably will do for the rest of my life but that's a small price to pay to be healthy.

I have continued to work whilst being in AF although some days were a real struggle to get to work i.e. breathless and exhaustion. People who have not had AF do not know what it feels like; they say to me "you look so well". It is comforting to know stories from other patient's and I am thankful for all the information that AFA provides and the good work that AFA does. I found all the information that you provide is very assuring when having this treatment, the doctors do not always tell you in detail.

Look forward to the next newsletter.

Ann R

