

Coral's Story

Some years ago, I was misdiagnosed with Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy (HOCM) and the prognosis was grim. Several years of incorrect treatment and misery followed during which time I gradually put on weight and became dependent on others due to being told to not lift a finger. My husband and my adult children also suffered during this time.

One night, I was taken into hospital and a cardiologist who specialises in HOCM was called. He advised me that I did not have HOCM and the treatment I had been receiving for this had caused me harm. I made contact with the AF Association Patients Services team who provided me with some valuable information which also made me suspect that this was not HOCM.

I have now had 3 ablations and 3 cardioversions. Unfortunately, they all only had short term effects but they have helped me to become more independent and active and I now only take minimal drugs.

In late 2017 I was abroad and caught Swine flu. This had a detrimental effect on my heart and I was diagnosed with Chronic Heart failure. I subsequently had a further ablation and one emergency cardioversion.

My cardiologist has now told me that my heart is stiff and that there is nothing more that can be done surgically.

I am 68 years old - fairly well, young for my age and as active as I can be but I am too old for a heart transplant in Australia so I have to accept my situation.

As well as my health problems, this my husband (aged 73) who is very fit and active, but has had two stents, has now developed Atrial Fibrillation which I believe was due to stress. This does seem to have been addressed with a recent cardioversion.

My advice to others is this - do not give up, always research your problem and try and find who can help you. Always get second and third opinions if you can. Lose weight and be as active as possible, don't drink and smoke and most importantly, don't ignore warning signs - my husband nearly died because he would not seek help with his "muscle pain".

I don't yet know how I will live with CHF as I am still trying to come to terms with it in my own mind as well as the reactions of my family. It is very hard to tell your children you have only a short time to live, then you don't die only to find out that you have something else that will kill you!

My husband and I will now try and do what we can while we can and live with enthusiasm and optimism.

My comments are mostly for younger sufferers who need to follow the same principle - I should have done this some time ago.

Incidentally - I was on Warfarin for 6 months which exacerbated my joint pain to an unbearable point. I also suffered frequent serious nose bleeds. I am now taking Pradaxa which has an antidote and my joint pain has been diminished by 75%

I hope my experience is helpful

Coral, Brisbane, Australia