

Mary's journey



My name is Mary McNamara. I was born on the 1st May 1935 in Ireland. I came to London in September 1953. After completing exams, I trained to be a teacher in Manchester (1959-1961) and taught three to seven year olds in London. I retired in July 1995 having reached my 60th birthday.

It was around this time when I felt my heart was beating rapidly. I visited my doctor, and he recommended me to see a heart specialist. It was then that I was advised to go on warfarin (May-September 1995), which was a trial period. It was later suggested that it should be stopped.

During the coming years, I had a regular check-up, and on the 22nd August 1998, I was advised to go on warfarin again, and this time for life. I had many tests, ECGs, 24-hour and seven day heart monitors. Eventually I was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation. I had regular blood tests; the lowest recorded was '1.1' and the highest on one occasion was '4.1'.

Since my retirement in 1995, I have led a very busy life: hospital chaplaincy, visiting two nursing homes, and people who are housebound. I also help in a drop-in centre for over

60's, where I serve meals, wash-up and converse with customers.

Each day I complete a programme of events. During all this activity, I feel I have a lot of energy, and I enjoy my work, which I find rewarding. I am out in all kinds of weather, having experienced damp clothes and wet shoes. I have had no flu jab in the last six years, nor coughs, colds or the flu!

I walk a fair deal, besides using public transport and all my work is voluntary. I visit other hospitals, nursing homes and sheltered housing when the need arises. My morning starts at 7.45am and I return home at 5pm. Five hours sleep a night is ample for me.

Seventeen years have now passed and I still have the energy to carry on my daily ministry, thanks to God. I feel alert and fully alive and active into the early hours of the morning.

My only complaint is my circulation in very cold weather. My fingers and feet are numb. It is when I am in the park feeding the birds that I feel my fingers are red and very painful.

I am taking digoxin, sotalol, warfarin, alendronic acid, calcium carbonate and colecalciferol.

I am not married, as you may have guessed. I belong to a community of sisters, who are also active. I hope and pray that I can continue to live my way of life for many more years.

Mary, London (2013)