

## Bev's story



*Bev showed no risk factors for AF-related stroke. Despite this, at the age of 45, she suffered a stroke out of the blue. Here she describes how a 7-day monitor finally led to a diagnosis of AF.*

In June 2011 I suffered an ischaemic stroke. It was caused by a blood clot of small to medium size. I was 45 years old with no known risk factors. I had no high blood pressure, normal cholesterol levels, didn't ever smoke, was not a big drinker but drank a little due to stress, and I had no family history of stroke. The only risk I feel there was to my health was huge levels of stress.

In the days leading up to my stroke I experienced headaches, and then again on the morning of the stroke. In the afternoon I was suffering with backache and at 6.30pm that evening I experienced really bad head pain, then dizziness and balance issues. This was then followed by paralysis of my whole left side accompanied by all the classic stroke symptoms. I was rushed to hospital in an ambulance because of stroke being fairly unusual in someone of my age.

I stayed in hospital for six nights and results confirmed that I had suffered an ischaemic stroke. Whilst in hospital my heart was monitored for 24 hours as I rested in bed. I had various other tests but doctors were puzzled as to why I had suffered a stroke having had no warning signs or any risk factors. I was prescribed a high dose of aspirin for six days post-stroke and then clopidogrel (an antiplatelet) until late September of 2011. The 24 hour heart monitoring I had on several occasions did not pick up any problems. Then in early October my consultant arranged a 7-day heart monitor. I was subsequently diagnosed with intermittent paroxysmal atrial fibrillation which was almost certainly the reason why I'd had a stroke. My risk of having a further AF-related stroke was now high due to the fact that I have already had one, so I was immediately prescribed warfarin to replace the clopidogrel which my consultant said would provide me with greater protection.

Experiencing a stroke whatever age you might be is massive. The effect of the stroke on my brain is permanent and I now suffer with emotional regulation issues and anxiety. There is always the worry that I might have another.

I cannot thank my medical team enough though, as although I had a delayed diagnosis of AF, at least I finally had an explanation for why I had experienced the stroke when I hadn't presented with any of the common risk factors. The 7-day monitor was vital to my diagnosis because without it I may still not have had any answers. Several 24 hr monitoring sessions picked up nothing.

I feel that the longer heart monitor process should be more readily available to patients as for me it proved so beneficial in picking up my AF and enabling me to receive the best medication for me, namely, warfarin.

**Bev Mottram-Roper, 2014**