

THE EFFECTS OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING CURED WITH ABLATION

It started about seven years ago at work one morning and I felt tight chest and funny feelings around my heart. My wife straight away contacted my GP who said come right away, but by the time I got to the surgery everything was back to normal. The GP made an appointment with a local consultant in Preston and went through everything – treadmill, ECG, everything. After six weeks he came up with the solution that it was down to stress and drinking too much coffee. I had quite a stressful job so I cut out caffeinated coffee, drank decaf, and it went away for three to four years and didn't come back again. Then all of a sudden, just over two years ago the same symptoms came back again – this time I went to Blackpool hospital and had another full series of tests. I was told my heart was healthy and they could not find anything wrong and suggested I contact a cardiac electrophysiologist in Manchester in case it was an electrical fault.

By this time the symptoms were coming more and more frequently, and I would have a spell of 2-3 weeks of every other day having 3-4 hours of uncomfortable palpitations. The electrophysiologist decided it was an electrical fault and I had my first ablation 20 months ago. I was fine for 5 months and had no symptoms at all until Christmas last year when it returned. It was quite a bit of a blow, having gone through the procedure feeling I was healthy and having returned to being a very active person. I do a lot of exercise- aerobics and cycling and this is a bit of a hindrance – I have had the second re-treatment and this is now 5 months on, in new territory. So hopefully the work is done the second time around and hopefully I'll be sorted.

The rhythm disturbance was Focal Atrial Fibrillation – they did the treatment on two pulmonary veins and part of the third. It was quite a long procedure, I was in theatre for more than 3 hours, but he was very confident and everything seemed to be fine. When it came back again I had a different feeling in my chest, it was a different experience – there were some long ones sometimes they would last 24 hours it was uncomfortable– not painful. So when he did the second procedure he had more or advanced equipment and was able to do a more thorough procedure second time around.