

Philip's story

Philip was diagnosed with AF at the age of 57, after suffering a stroke while on holiday. Initially he was misdiagnosed as having a viral infection. A simple pulse check could have indicated he had AF which can contribute to AF-related stroke.

In August 2002 when I was 57 I went to Rockley Park, a Haven resort near Poole in Dorset with two other adults and two children. We had a lovely day in Bournemouth on the Tuesday and in the evening we had a chinese take away. During the meal I felt unwell. This feeling continued during the next day, double vision with vomiting and diarrhoea and I was unable to walk.

We called the first aider of Rockley Park out and she recommended getting the local doctor to come to see me. He duly attended and after examining me, he said it was a viral infection; if I rested and kept drinking liquid all would be well.

The symptoms did not improve so we called the health service direct number and they reiterated what the local doctor had said. I laid in bed until we returned home on the Friday. The staff at Rockley Park had to help me into the car to come home.

I was unable to drive home so my wife Barbara drove home and we unfortunately got hit from behind by another car at a roundabout in Bournemouth. This holiday was a holiday from hell.

On arrival at home the neighbour helped me into the house, as I still could not walk. Our own doctor was called out and he did some simple tests like making you touch your nose and diagnosed that I had had a stroke. He told me to go to Broomfield Hospital where I was rushed through Accident and emergency to the medical assessment unit.

They wired me up to heart monitors and these showed that my heart was racing at up to 200 beats per minute. As a consequence of this I was placed in an emergency side room and then to the stroke ward. I had 24 hour heart monitors and brain scans which confirmed

the stroke but not the atrial fibrillation. Medication was administered including aspirin, sotalol and flecainide but unfortunately I suffered side effects from both sotalol and flecainide.

I had physiotherapists and occupational therapists come to my home after discharge from hospital to teach me to walk again and check my cognitive skills. I also had a check-up by the GP. He measured my pulse by holding my wrist and this is when he discovered I had atrial fibrillation. He advised me to go to Accident and Emergency at Broomfield and it was here that they confirmed Atrial Fibrillation and changed the aspirin to warfarin.

I had to go several times for tests to make sure my INR was between 2 and 3. A cardioversion was also arranged but when I went for the first one I was in sinus rhythm so they could not do it. The second time I went for cardioversion I was in AF so they undertook the procedure and said it was successful. This lasted a few days but ultimately went back to AF.

They would not do cardioversion again and would not do catheter ablation either, so I have to live with it. This was about the time Tony Blair had AF and had successful treatment. The consultant and doctor said my AF was different.

As a result of all the tests for stroke and AF, it has also been noticed that I have diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, so I am now taking the following medications; metformin, digoxin, atorvastatin, warfarin, doxazosin, candesartan, gliclazide and amlodipine.

So from hardly ever going to doctors and hospitals before 2002, I now go quite frequently for my INR and diabetes. I was lucky being initially misdiagnosed did not result in any other issue. I can hear the irregular heartbeat at night but I am still here after 13 years so taking the pills must be working.

Philip, Essex (2015)