

A Note from Liz

OUT & ABOUT and feeling safe!

After several years of “funny turns”, lasting from a few minutes to several hours, repeated visits to the GP etc, a serious episode in November 2006 with a heart rate of 160, cold sweats, breathlessness & feeling very faint, led to an emergency 999 trip to the hospital and finally a diagnosis of Paroxysmal Atrial Fibrillation.

Drug treatment trial & error plus two ablation procedures didn't seem to help that much, as the random episodes continued, some minor, and others major with further hospital admissions. After 2 years my current medication seems to be better suited to my situation and things for now seem to have medically improved a great deal.

However for me, the real impact of the ‘Atrial Fibrillation’ has been emotional, with a large dent in

my self-confidence, sense of independence and quality of life. Having spent my working life in some fairly high powered roles that involved living and travelling throughout Europe and across America interacting with the senior executives of international companies, I became afraid of travelling alone more than a few miles from home and certainly not outside the catchment area of my local hospital where they know me and have my data on hand.

This level of vulnerability and scare was hard for my self esteem to deal with, to accept that I did not have control and was not able to fix or seemingly get it fixed has become a life changing learning experience for me and has taught me a lot about my life and the values that are important but I still hated my fears about

travelling alone anywhere and the lack of independence that caused. Then by chance, from a magazine, I discovered the Medipal ID Cards and Key Ring Fob. Such a simple idea, a credit card piece of plastic that had all the essential information printed on it for any paramedic or Emergency Department doctor to see and use in understanding my current condition/medication and previous history, plus my partner's & GP's contact numbers.

These days whenever I leave the house alone, I have my keys with the fob telling the world that I carry a medical ID card, and I have a purse with the ID card clearly visible in the plastic window, at last I feel safe. To be honest there is always a small level of anxiety but it's O.K. and I can get in the car and go where I want or need to go.