



Paul's story

Although I didn't know it, I had my first episode of paroxysmal atrial fibrillation (PAF) when I was about sixteen. I subsequently joined the fire service and served for almost twenty years, retiring in 1993. It was not until 2001 when I had another episode of PAF and I almost underwent shock treatment to restore sinus rhythm (in fact, the anticipation of this stimulated the correction of my heart rhythm). At the time, I had held a pilot's licence and subsequently had to undergo several tests to regain my licence. I later endured another two episodes (each time these self-corrected) and had to again convince the CAA that I was fit to fly. Throughout these episodes, I have been a drummer, entertaining many audiences and raising cash for charities through my endurance exploits. I now undertake triathlons and have not had a PAF episode since 2006, in spite of being told by the CAA specialist that it will happen again.

I feel as if I now carry a burden of doubt, never knowing when another episode will strike and not fully understanding what has caused the previous episodes and how to prevent another. All I can do is try and keep myself fit, but, even then, doctors advise me not to 'overdo it'. So what do I do? It seems I can't obtain any definite advice that will help me live with my condition and I am left to look after myself. I am not stupid, possessing a degree in law, an MBA, and having advised many highly qualified people on life issues, as well as saving lives, but I could really do with talking to someone who can give sound advice.

On the positive side, I am very optimistic and tend to be very motivational (according to my family, too much so!). I am planning several cycle rides this year and will hopefully undertake another charity fund raising event. I could probably write a few pages describing my interesting exploits and how I have enjoyed life as much as possible with this 'cloud' hanging over me. I guess if there was one word I would like to be used to describe me it would be: Irrepressible.

