



### Dave's story

POW!...somehow does not quite adequately describe the sensation of having 800 volts delivered to your heart.

If one is asleep when this happens, or half asleep as I was, one is very much awake afterwards!

Years after my heart attack I was thought to be at risk of suffering VF (Ventricular Fibrillation) where the heart beats very fast and chaotically.

Going into VF at home, far from health professionals and their defibrillator, is often fatal. Beating fast and erratically the heart can't pump blood properly, so the first thing to suffer is the brain as it gets starved of oxygen. If the patient is awake, he or she is aware of a fainting feeling; if it goes on long enough collapse will occur. After a few minutes brain damage may occur, and brain death follows not that long after.

My personal POW! was not given by a health professional but was delivered automatically, at 3am one morning, whilst I was alone in bed. Back in May 2008 I was fitted with one of the cleverest pieces of technology in the world, an "Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator" (ICD).

My ICD, the size of a very streamlined stainless-steel mobile phone, sits just under the skin of my chest below my left shoulder with two leads going into my heart through a vein. Most of the time I forget it is there, there is just a small sensitive area where the leads come close to the surface. The ICD monitors the heart and helps keep the lower half, the ventricles, beating at a steady rate, with an allowance for a slightly faster rate for exercise. If the beat rate of the ventricles goes over a set upper limit number the ICD then delivers a shock straight into the heart to try to get it beating regularly again.

My 3 a.m event brought me fully awake. I could not get back to sleep and, feeling very lonely and vulnerable I called NHS Direct. In the end I was taken into A&E and given a range of tests, all of which gave the correct results.

I like my little electronic friend a lot, as the consultant said, "But for that device you would not be sitting here now."

The only real down side is that one has to surrender one's driving licence for six months after implantation and after every subsequent event. Suffering a fainting spell followed by an electric shock does not make for safe driving!