

## Len's story

I am 69 years of age and had to retire at 60. When I was five years old I had Rheumatic Fever, although my life I suffered from tiredness at certain times, some days I would be fine and the next day exhausted, many times ending up in hospital and coming out with a diagnosis of a virus. Not until 1996 was I diagnosed with a leaky Mitral Valve after being taken into hospital with atrial fibrillation. I ended up with 9 cardio versions over a period of years, each one working for a short time. I was eventually in AV permanently and an Ablation was done, once again this did not work and it was decided in 2008 to proceed with an AV Node. I did have a pacemaker inserted in 2003 which came into its own after the AV node.

I had many instances where my heart would pop back into rhythm and the Doctors would proceed to tell me that I was a malingerer. In 1996 this same Doctor, two days later, put a camera down my throat and said 'Hah Surgery' I then I asked him if this is why I was collapsing and he agreed.

I was very fortunate to find a very good cardiologist after a second opinion who has looked after me since.

I still get spells of exhaustion but it is better than the alternative.

I have suffered with heart related problems through my life and it never being diagnosed until 1996. When young, I was a keen cyclist and swimmer and many times could not understand why some days I could beat the world and others I couldn't raise an arm. It was never diagnosed until 1996 when I first went into AF, during the previous night I lay in bed and laughed with my wife saying that everything was beating fast, being the first experience of AF, I drove to work the next morning, still in, what I now know as AF and immediately collapsed in the office, it was an hour before the next person came in at 7 am and I was taken to the local hospital, where my heart was 160/180. I was given a cardio version and relief was immediate, unfortunately this was the start of many episodes of AF until it was decided by four doctors that an AV Node was necessary.

After the first Cardio version I carried on as normal until I collapsed once again, being taken to my local hospital, I was discharged and two hours later was on the floor of my lounge ringing my GP asking for help as I couldn't breathe. The GP arranged an appointment with my doctor in London, I fortunately had private cover and I was kept in and 7 litres of fluid, which had been missed by my local hospital was released. At the same time an Angiogram was taken and a leaky Mitral Valve was diagnosed. This had previously been diagnosed by my local hospital but the fluid had been missed.

I had the Mitral valve operation in November 1996 but unfortunately still had AV. A pacemaker was fitted in 2003 rather than a Defibrillator and eventually I had the AV node in 2008. I still have problems with SOB but I'm Tickety Boo in the heart area. (My wife doesn't think so though)

One of the good things that came out of all this is that after the heart operation, I and three other patients all kept in touch after discharge, checking up on each other and getting comfort from knowing that the aches and pains you were going through were the same for all of us.