

Case Study: Andrew York

History

I have had Ménière's for more than 30 years and it has come and gone over that time. Many sufferers will be familiar with this pattern. Months can pass when you can almost forget that you have the condition and then bang; a major attack of dizziness, sometimes throwing you to the floor and accompanied by vomiting. A couple of hours of trying not to move and then feeling pretty poorly for 24 hours. There is then the worry of going anywhere for the next few months. Will I get an attack? What will I do if I have one? How will I get home? This feeling is really debilitating and it reached a crescendo towards the end of last year. My wife and I were on our Ruby Wedding tour to China and when leaving on a bus after visiting the pandas, I thought that there was an earthquake and the bus was being swallowed up by the ground. We then had an internal flight and the guide said that I must not say I was dizzy as the airline would not transport us, splitting us up from the rest of the party. I was loaded into a wheelchair and managed to tough it out. A week later I had a "drop attack", landing on a tiled floor and severely hurting my arm, closely followed by another spell whilst in a swimming pool. Over the years I have had numerous appointments with various consultants. I have had CT and MRI scans. I took betahistine three times a day and stemetil when I had the attacks.



Decision

Something had to be done and I was aware that a gentamicin injection into the eardrum was an ultimate solution. The Ménière's Society put me in touch with two very helpful people who had had the operation. Both said 'do not hesitate, you will get your life back'. Their operations had been carried out by a Mr Bottrill. Amazingly he was based at High Wycombe and Stoke Mandeville close to where I lived so I went for a consultation. He examined my history and immediately said I was a prime candidate for the procedure.

The Operation

I waited approximately three months which was concerning as I had a walking holiday in Spain booked with friends and Mr Bottrill had warned me that I may be worse for up to three months after the operation. I was wheeled through to the theatre after a full anaesthetic and came to very quickly afterwards. I felt fine and my wife picked me up. The next week I felt slightly unbalanced and tired but otherwise incredibly well. After that first week I felt absolutely great with little or no side effects and certainly no attacks. I had to go back after three weeks to have the dressing removed and will have to go back after three months for a final analysis. I mustn't get any water in the ear, so have to wear a cap to shower and swim but so far so good, however I realise that I may have been particularly lucky with the post operation experience. What about the other two issues with gentamicin? My tinnitus seems to be about the same but I think I have lost a little more hearing in my 'Ménière's' ear. A relatively small price to pay for my much improved overall health.

Conclusion

I can only agree with my mentors that it was the best thing I have done. I know that this is not right for everyone but for a long term sufferer and, where the quality of life is being affected; it is something well worth considering with your consultant.

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Ménieré's Society
for dizziness and balance disorders



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