

Living with Parkinson's Disease for 30 Years

My name is David Pickin, I live in North Bedfordshire and this is the account of my illness over the past thirty years from memory.

It all started when I was nearly forty. I was a regular runner of varying distances. Whilst taking exercise I started to run with my right arm elevated. As this hadn't happened before I became concerned. My wife noticed me doing this; I told her that it was due to me carrying a heavy briefcase each day. Later I began to have a tremor in my right arm so I consulted my GP. After seeing him, he suggested that I visit a Neurologist at our local Hospital.

I was 43 when he diagnosed me with an illness he called 'Parkinson's'. He prescribed me with a drug called Artane. After taking this drug I found that I started to walk oddly, however I was prepared to put up with this, as my tremor had significantly decreased. I was playing rugby at this time in my life and trained daily. Whilst I was on this drug I continued to run, and completed 2 half, and one full marathons.

My Employment was at a Defence Engineering Company. This was a very stressful post, as I was a Quality Control Manager in charge of many departments. At home I carried out many tasks including gardening and bringing up a daughter. I led a normal active busy life but needed support from the family at times.

oblige, as no doubt the trials could possibly help me, but could also in the long run, benefit others. I had concerns about these trials, and ultimately the results, however I informed the Neurologist that I was prepared to participate and see how things went. I was around 65 when I started the trials. My wife had now retired, and therefore I made the decision, due to several factors, including speed of my reactions, that I could no longer continue driving.

These trials started off with a full medical, physical and psychological assessment. At this trial the Neurologist there told me that they wished to try some drugs that had not been prescribed before. It was also mentioned that I might be given a placebo. I was informed that I was a suitable candidate to take part, which of course delighted me.

I continued to go back to my local hospital for regular tests. I was pleased to inform my Neurologist that I felt much better, and I realised that I was taking something extra and not the 'placebo'.

I found for the first time in many years that I could, with little difficulty, start to fully dress myself. Exercising became easier as well, and it was not long before I was able to start training and running again, and I continue daily to reach a distance of two miles. Continuing on these drugs now known as Azelect, this has increased my confidence in many areas.



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After more time spent with him, and continuing to take Artane, he concluded that I did have Parkinson's disease. The diagnosis of this came, as a great shock to me, however I decided that life had to go on, and I had to make the best of it.

In my fifties activities I used to do easily, I found harder, for example dressing myself, writing, and standing for long periods. At Fifty-seven, I had a very nasty car accident, (which incidentally was not my fault), this crash really affected my confidence, and following the accident I seemed to become shakier and not so nimble on my feet, however I continued to drive. Later my Neurologist as a consequence prescribed me with a new drug called Madapar. At the age of 58 I retired early from my job.

In subsequent visits to my Neurologist I spoke to him about how I was losing confidence in myself, and how the illness was continuing to affect me. He invited me to take part in some clinical trials. I said I would be happy to

I have started to do things again which I used to enjoy but put on hold. I have had two separate holidays to Russia and South Africa, which involved a lot of physical excursion, I have some help at the Airports, but most of the holiday is under my own control. I would never have imagined that I would be able to contemplate these trips before the trials. I concluded taking part in the trials in late 2002.

In the last six months I have started to use a patch called Rotigotine. This works well with the other drugs I am currently taking.

When I look back at the years of having Parkinson's disease, I can't pretend that I have had no side effects to the drugs I have taken. My walking has become affected, I have had falls, my eyelids have closed often, and I have suffered from upset stomachs, but thankfully at the moment the drugs I am taking seem to be suiting me much better, so I do hope that the way I am feeling at the moment continues. I am now in my early seventies and have just booked a holiday for a fortnight in Norway!

*David Pickin,
13th February 2007.*

Journal reviewers (turn to page 36 for reviews)

Heather Angus-Leppan, Royal Free & Barnet Hospitals;
Chrystalina Antoniadis, Cambridge Centre for Brain Repair.
Roger Barker, Cambridge Centre for Brain Repair;
Alasdair Coles, Cambridge University;

Andrew Larner, Walton Centre, Liverpool;
Mark Manford, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge and Bedford Hospitals;
Wendy Phillips, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge;
Robert Redfern, Morrision Hospital, Swansea;
Ailie Turton, University of Bristol.