

Diary of a great NHS experience by a grateful neck lump patient.

Mon 18th Jan 2021

I had a swelling in my neck and my wife rang the GP for advice. The phone evaluation was that I was probably suffering a gland infection and was given a week's course of antibiotics which we collected before lunch that day. By day 5 it was clear that the antibiotics were not providing any positive treatment.

Mon 25th Jan

Requested appointment with GP. I was referred to the Princess Royal Hospital by my GP who was concerned about the neck growth possibly restricting my airway.

We arrived at the hospital an hour later and were immediately in consultation with a professional in Ward 8. (My wife travelled with me as I am profoundly deaf and face masks make lip-reading rather tough !).

We were at the hospital all day. During the day I was examined by a stream of different specialists. To include several members of Ward 8, associated skills staff, dental staff, x-ray and ultrasound. (This list is incomplete)

As an ex-theatre nurse at the Princess Royal, my wife was particularly impressed by the wide range of specialist medical skills applied to diagnosing the problem with my neck.

We had some short wait periods and were offered sandwiches at lunch time.

The news reports that the NHS is under seige because of the current plague. All the staff who attended to me seemed cheerful, focused, thorough and determined to diagnose my problem. As each professional completed their examination, great care was given to ensure that we understood what was happening and why, together with the results.

At around 5pm we had a wind up meeting with a registrar who said I had to be prepared for the lump to be a cancer. I write to remark that with all the current publicity, we were both hugely impressed with the staff performance.

Thu Jan 28th

COVID vaccination at Gobowen.

Sat Jan 31st

CT scan at PRH.

Fri Feb 5th

MRI at Shrewsbury Hospital.

Thu Feb 18th

UltraSound with biopsy at PRH - lump chracterises as secondary cancer.

Tue Feb 23rd

Met the Consultant et al at Shrewsbury Hospital. He advised that he remove my tonsils in the expectation that he would find a cancer primary and at the same time remove the secondary lump from my neck. I signed an approval to operate. Again we were most impressed with the range of skills available to me at the meeting.

Sat Feb 27th

2nd Vaccination at Wem special arrangment by my GP.

Mon Mar 1st

PET scan at Stoke Hospital.

Wed Mar 3rd

Pre-op assessment at Shrewsbury Hospital.

Thu Mar 4th

Letter instructing me to stop blood thinners before the op.

Mon Mar 8th

Received a copy of a letter to my GP about sleep apnoea.

Mon Mar 8th?

PET scan says nothing found below the neck - good news.

Mon Mar 15th

2nd Pre Op assessment: COVID test at Shrewsbury Hospital - negative.

Wed 17th Mar

Cancelled dental appointment due to enforced COVID isolation before operation.

Thu Mar 18th

First operation: tonsillectomy and neck lump removal at PRH.

My operation to remove the lump and tonsils took 5 hours.

Each day I was visited by surgery staff to check and advise on my progress.

During my stay I had two COVID tests - both negative.

The stay was made more pleasant because the new NHS WiFi allowed me to watch Netflix with subtitles on my new phone.

After 2 nights of excellent Ward 8 care, I was allowed home.

Sun Mar 21st

Released from hospital.

Tue Mar 23rd

Phone call from GP regarding post-op progress.

Wed Mar 24th

On Day 6 of my operation we were routinely telephoned by the surgeon who had removed my tonsils. He wanted to know if I had experienced any bleeding. At that time I had a some dried blood on my pillow overnight and had been coughing up dark blood on and off through the day.

Wed Mar 24th

Day 6 of op

Later, around 5.30 that day I suddenly started vomiting large blood clots and my wife rushed me to A&E at PRH. After an hour's wait in A&E I was admitted for a repair to my throat. It was assumed that I had incurred a minor infection.

Thu Mar 25th

(at 2am - 2 hrs to repair bleed) The operation the following morning was an interesting experience, entirely professional and I had an overwhelming realisation that each person was confident that they would fix me, my having been very disturbed by coughing blood.

Again I have daily consults for progress.

Fri 26th Mar

Two surgeons visit to check on me before leaving. They also check for the histology report on my lump and happily it shows as benign. Again after 2 nights of excellent Ward 8 care I was allowed home.

Sun 28th Mar

Released from hospital.

Mon 29th Mar

I look back on this experience with profound respect for every aspect of the NHS which I experienced. OK it isn't perfect, the paperwork is horrendous - even I have quite a pile, but I AM informed.

There is a variation in staff performance but the average I experienced was cheerful, thorough and friendly.

Having watched staff cleaning and donning PPE many times a day - I realised how punitive the plague has been on the NHS.

I also witnessed an appalling, depressing act of verbal racism by a day patient towards a registrar.

At home patient shuffles 100 yd and back as a short walk - then daily until 4th April.

Tue 30th Mar

Restarted daily dose of Apixaban blood thinners.

Fri 2nd Apr

Patient finishes anti-biotic course.

Sat 3rd Apr

Letter arrives confirming neck cyst was benign.

Sun 4th Apr

Patient finishes using painkillers.

Patient walks the 1.5 mile block per his daily habit for the 1st time since the operations.

Wed 7th Apr

Letter arrives for sign off appointment at PRH on 28th April.

Thu 8th Apr

Phone call from Pharmacist at GP practice making appointment to check blood pressure.

Thu 8th Apr

Phone call from GP practice Cancer Support nurse checking to see if all was OK.

Fri 9th Apr

Patient able to blow nose today !

Tue 13th Apr

Normal taste and touch returns to patient's tongue at the injection site.

Thu 15th Apr

Blood pressure check at Cambrian Medical Centre, Oswestry.

Fri 16th Apr

Dental appointment May 5th arranged to fix broken tooth and lost crown.

Sat 17th Apr

Chased by vaccination service as a no-show today - explained I already had my second jab by special arrangement.

Tue 20th Apr

Sore throat seems healed

Wed 28th Apr

Sign off

THANK YOU NHS

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