

Injection Update & Surgery Prep

The facet joint injections did essentially work for me, the needle insertion points remained tender but other symptoms greatly improved. The tremor in my arms reduced vastly, and the pain after the first week did not require any medication. I was able to function a lot better and continued to keep the pain diary.

At first I didn't know whether they had worked or not, whether I was just going through a usual good phase or if they had actually made a difference. 6 weeks later when they started wearing off, I knew they had basically. Tremors and pain began returning, as well as the pins and needles and everything in between. By then though, I knew surgery was only a few weeks away.

A finalised date for surgery was confirmed in April. Because the pre-op was done in February, I was told a follow-up phone assessment would be required, which has now been done and further specimen samples (swabs and urine - also done). Due to the travelling distance, it was decided I would be admitted the day before the actual surgery as it allegedly reduces the risk of DVT (blood clots) and allowed for final checks to be done onsite.

Standard practice for anyone undergoing complex spinal surgery at the hospital is a decolonisation preventative treatment for 5 days - day 5 being the day of surgery, so since yesterday I have been showering with Hibiscrub (an antiseptic wash), putting some nasal ointment in my nose 3 times a day and gargling with a mouth wash 4 times a day. I don't actually see the point to it, but whatever keeps them happy.

I signed consent for surgery in March after meeting with my consultant's fellow. He went through the surgical details with me - Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion, the risks and recovery etc. He answered my billion questions and made sure I understood there was no guarantee it would work, but given my situation he suggests the surgery as an attempt to improve my quality of life. He stressed there was no immediate detriments should I not choose to have surgery and that I could withdraw consent at any point.

I saved the latest images that day, and walked out confident I was making the right choice. I have not dwelled on surgery much since, but have continued working towards it. I completed University having passed every assessment this year with a first and receiving two awards for volunteer stuff I am involved in there. I progressively told the important people in my life that the date had been set, culminating in my entire family being aware by last weekend.

At this point, I am not worried or stressed about surgery at all, I know that even if anything goes wrong, my surgical team will be able to deal with it. I do believe I am in the very best care, and I have full faith in my consultant. My family don't seem to share this frame of mind though because I keep hearing 'don't worry about it' - sick of hearing those words now to be honest, because I really am not.

As expected, once certain members of my family knew, they felt the need to tell others and as such, I have met with more people than I care to in excess. Luckily, I chose to book back-up travel arrangements in advance so I will actually have some peaceful alone time before I get to the hospital as I shall be travelling alone.

In these past 3 weeks I have been half medicated to the max and rarely manage to make it through the entire day in an upright position, but thankfully I have still managed to complete everything I wanted/needed to. Only a few things left to pack now, then I am all set to go. I

anticipate recovery will be my greatest focus, but choosing not to dwell on what specifics it will entail until I wake up post-surgery and know what hand I have been dealt.

In the lead up to surgery, some amazing things have fabricated themselves, and are waiting for my return so that is a big motivation to get through recovery, which is expected to be 6 weeks. I think it is good to have things to look forward too. Can't wait to be reading and studying again when I am well enough after surgery. Keeping it under wraps until the final days was a good decision, because it meant I could continue as normal without being told I had surgery looming at every given moment, as has been the case since.