

### It does get better

To cut a 3-4 month story short, after seeing several doctors, being put through a whole load of tests (let's not forget the blood tests here just for back up) and a whole load of waiting / being messed around. Following having to face my worst nightmares, nearly scaring the life out of my personal tutors, and traumatising most of family, friends, and colleagues; surgery never happened!

I should mention surgery is still not totally off the cards but totally out-ruling it for now is dependent on the results of the latest set of x-rays, results of which are waiting to be discussed at an MDT meeting. After Neurology told me they had been overruled, I'm not entirely sure what I was more annoyed about - the fact that I had stressed myself out and rearranged my entire diary for nothing, that nothing was still conclusive or that if surgery was going to happen a surgeon I didn't like at all may end up doing it. Needless to say, none of those went down well at all. At the time I was so fed up from it all that I got home and told everybody I was withdrawing myself from medical care.

Eventually after being coerced by my family and best friend I eventually gave in and agreed to continue with being used as a guinea pig (because let's face it, that's what it feels like sometimes). I did it with a twist though, because I was sick of being messed around in Manchester, I asked for my care to be transferred to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in London. I had been thinking about it a while, and because it is their entire specialism, and their consultants seemed to have the expertise not to keep playing pass the parcel with me, I decided that I would pursue that route.

I didn't want to face another doctor, so I did the research to find a Consultant who both worked at RNOH and possessed the required qualifications to make judgment on my case. Then I asked my mother to ask a GP to do it - plus I didn't think my own GP would do it on request and I couldn't face the battle of convincing her. Anyway, the referral got done, they rang me a few weeks later to tell me the consultant I had chosen would take my case and that they were requesting all my scan/test reports. They have them now and will also be having an MDT meeting on 25th June to discuss it, no idea when I will hear back from them though, but soon after Wednesday I hope.

The consultant I got passed to though was actually to his credit, excellent! I have to say we got further than any consultant before him on this matter. We went through the entire picture so far, and then he told me he still needed to find out what is the root cause for my arm symptoms. At the fear of him wanting to repeat an EMG I asked how he planned to figure that out - luckily for me it was just another set of x-rays; extension and flexion. His working theory is that when I bend my head down that is what is causing most of the problems, which is actually very plausible considering that is what causes me most pain.

He was pleasingly on the exact page as me thankfully; in terms that he too isn't convinced surgery is the answer. Initially he thought I wanted surgery; that was rapidly corrected. We did however still have the debate on surgeries for if and when the time came. We also agreed on the majority of surgical options; fusion is not the way forward on the basis it would fast-track further degeneration. Disc replacement was the agreed way forward, though whilst I was querying the idea of double disc replacement, he was firm on that not being suitable. His reasoning was that he wants to keep my discs in my neck for as long as possible

because that's the best option. My argument for double disc replacement was that I didn't want him to go in twice, but I see his point.

Either way I am much more comfortable now with the situation, also it probably helps that I am not in pain and I've been off painkillers since the end of March. I've been managing pain for the best part on rest (never underestimate the wonders it does), bio-freeze gel/spray and ice packs. Plus I try not to do stupid things anymore like lifting heavy things etc. Keeping to certain limits has its benefits!!! Also, I promised my disability advisor and personal tutor at uni that I wouldn't do anything stupid.