

## 5 weeks Post-Op

Well it is reaching 5 weeks now since surgery. It too early to comment on the pain front as I am still on MST (continuous release Morphine), but I have managed to successfully reduce the night dose. Don't think it would be wise to try again with the day time dosage as the night dose doesn't last the full 12 hours yet, but it is a good start. Lasts between 8-10 hours right now which is great, sometimes I need to take Paracetamol to get me to the next dose, others I try and ignore the pain as best as possible. It's a rarity on most days that I have to take the breakthrough Morphine, and that is usually only because I've overdone it during the day.

Best news is, is that putting the bracket in and adjusting the alignment of the c-spine has really helped. Headrests on chairs, even in cars and on the train etc. don't cause me any additional pain. This will be because the new alignment doesn't cause cord compression when in that position so that is quite pleasing to note. It is taking some getting used to but I actually use a pillow when I sleep at night now too.

I have maintained good flexion movement, which is now relatively unpainful, but as expected extension has reduced ever so slightly due to the uniplate. Rotation either way is still fairly stiff, but I shouldn't be experimenting with that until the 6 weeks are up anyway so that is progress too. Can't comment on the shoulder pain as I am not weight-bearing or doing anything particularly active yet, but it is intermittent depending on my sleeping position. Tremors have greatly improved and so has the pins and needle to an extent.

Vision remains dodgy, exacerbated by the Morphine I think, but needless to say, I do require my glasses now if I want to see clearly at a distance, sometimes even when reading or typing too. Don't know if the headaches are related but they seem to be frequent which is annoying at times, but usually occur when sitting up mostly, indicating it is time to lie down again. Concentration and consciousness is doing amazingly well, memory sometimes takes a small hit and thinking can add to the headaches at times, but I am very happy with the progress. I envisage that by next week I really will be ready to start working on my dissertation.

I can take bigger bites of food now, but chewing large amounts can be uncomfortable and moving tongue around can be uncomfortable, however that improves daily. Large gulps or yawning, laughing etc. are becoming less painful, but I can still tell that there has been work done on the area when I do so. Ability to sit up for longer periods is also increasing which is nice. Also, adjusted ways of cooking to facilitate the weight so I was fairly pleased with myself when I thought of that. Because I am fairly mobile most days I've not been wearing the DVT prevention stockings as much as I should have, the heat hasn't helped in making them more enticing either, looking forward to next week when the guilt of not doing so will pass.

I still spend most of my time resting, but I that is what recovery is for. I am glad that it is going well, and I making good progress on the whole. I would be lying if I said I was content with the medication front as I didn't really anticipate being reliant on Morphine this long, but I am glad I am generally down to just the MST. I have managed to distinguish that it was the Sevredol giving me the hallucinations, severe drowsiness and acting as an unwanted diuretic. It was also root to the peaks in temperature and itching, both of which have stabilised more now that I rarely take it.

I remembered that I forgot to mention the nosebleeds after surgery too, however that was because of the oxygen tubing in my nose, and improved within days when I come off of it.

For those on the ward who had the same problem and couldn't come off their oxygen though, they got periodically converted to an oxygen mask so the vessels weren't taking the direct hit of oxygen being blown straight up into the nostrils. Just thought it was worth mentioning in case any of you encountered the same problem and jumped to the same conclusion I did of thinking it was coming from the throat.

Doing very well in short I think, prone to getting bored now that I am now more alert but there is only a week to go before I start filling my brain with academics again (I promised myself I would lay off it until this no matter how tempting it is). Very glad I have tried to rest and do as little as possible during this recovery phase, can't wait to see the new x-rays and CT images. I am thankful to everybody who has entertained me during this time, it really is greatly appreciated.