

I believe my story commences in Jan 2017.

I had severe abdominal pain all day and night and was medicating myself with Nurofren during the day every four hours or less and Codeine at night. I couldn't lie on my left side and every night I was pacing up and down the hall way in excruciating pain.

I had numerous trips to the Doctor who couldn't work out what the problem was. A multitude of test began with the all clear.

I presented to A&E one night as I didn't think I could cope any longer! I was told that unless I had a life threatening issue they would get the pain under control and send me home. I was physical and mentally exhausted.

The next week I collapsed at work as the abdominal pain was not easing off with medication. Off to hospital and once again told the same thing, we will get your pain under control and you will be released. The Doctor asked if there was any problem at home or at work!! He prescribed Amitriptyline Hydrochloride. The pain continued throughout the coming days and nights.

Looking back I don't know how I managed but I remember feeling completely alone, let down with the medical profession as no one really took it seriously and no one really understands what I'm going through.

4 days later 24th April walking inside the house I felt an awful pain in my chest, as I hadn't eaten any dinner as I wasn't hungry so just thought it may be indigestion so I sipped some soda water with no relief.

The pain was intensifying so I thought I would lay down upstairs to see if that helped and it didn't, it was a crushing pain in my chest with pain down both arms. I was trying to calm myself and breath into the pain but the thoughts of "I'm having a heart attack" kept overcoming me and I was trying to reason with myself that it's just not possible as I'm not a likely candidate for one. The minutes were ticking away and I knew that time was critical if I was having a heart attack. I thought I am going to die here alone. I then just owned that fact that this was indeed the case and called Health Direct. I called them because I was also scared of calling an Ambulance and going to the same hospital with the feeling of them thinking not her again!

Health Direct immediately called the Ambulance and they asked that I stay on the line and instructed me to get down stairs and unlock the door.

I then sat on the couch and called my partner with "get home quick" as that was all I could muster enough strength to say. I now realise exactly the magnitude of that call, he had no idea of what to expect when he arrived home.

The paramedics arrived and thankfully off I went to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Once taking into Resus tests and bloods were taken a young Doctor spoke to me and said it appears you may have had a mild heart attack but I think you may just have inflammation and you will most likely go home after 4 hours. After 4 hours then there was definitely a change in pace with the staff. Once they were sure that I didn't have any pain at all they transferred me to Coronary Care Unit.

Majority of the time I couldn't fault the care or support I received. The only problem for me was with the night staff and after 3 days the abdominal pain returned and no one seemed to really care about that as I was in the heart unit and at one time I was told that that's not their concern as you're here for your heart. I felt like I was back to square one and what the hell am I going to do now!!

After two nights of walking the floor and crying in chronic pain I finally received some strong pain relief. I am sensitive to Morphine but I feel like if I end up in hospital again with anything related to the artery condition I have I won't tell them so I can get the pain under control more quickly.

I was shocked when I was told about SCAD of the Circumflex artery (heart). The cardiologist and the Registrar would say I was complicated due to the findings of irregularity of the distal cervical segment of the right ICA consistent with dissection (2 neck artery dissections) one being the internal carotid artery. They then informed me that I have Fibromuscular Dysplasia in my kidneys and possible Mesenteric Ischaemia of the gut that still needs to be investigated which can lead to – **dissection.**

I couldn't process all this information so my partner John was present at all the morning Doctor rounds. I was on various medications that my body didn't like so I was either feeling nauseous or doped up. I felt like I was taking a cocktail of drugs and kept asking are you sure I can take all these tablets together.

On the evening of the 9th day I was discharged and leaving the hospital I felt like my safety net was gone and I was worried.

I returned to A&E on the 17th May with a two day headache and stabbing pain in my kidney. I was advised to take my medical information with me as if I mentioned SCAD I may receive 'looks of' what is that' which I did. I handed over the paperwork and taken in quite quickly. I only went there as I was worried about the artery to my kidney but the Doctor was more concerned with my headache. After tests six hours later and a good chat with a well-informed Doctor I was able to go home.

It really rocked me as a strong and confident woman and has left me feeling vulnerable and worried about what the future holds. At times I feel sadness and anger and then I feel grateful that I have experienced SCAD three times - two I don't know had happened and I'm still here living! I have always appreciated life and the beauty around me so I will continue to do so even more so now. I need time to process and time will heal although I know that I need to think about moving that piece of furniture or carrying all the grocery bags in from the car. My partner John has endured a lot of stress during and after as he thought he may lose me and that made him become unwell for a short period of time. It has been incredibly hard for the family as having to face uncertainty is difficult.

Not long after being at home I received a call from Tricia the Patient Educator for Cardiac Rehabilitation at Sir James Gairdner Hospital and I cannot describe how much that call meant to me, somebody actually cares about me now I have left the hospital. If I am worried at all I can call Tricia and get her advice and she will call me to let me know that appointments are being made and to check in and see how I am.

I am still trying to work out when to go to the hospital if I'm worried, I have felt unwell for a few days with tightening in my throat and a hollow feeling in my chest and ended calling my nurse as I call her lol. I need to find a GP that knows about SCAD and the other conditions I have as I'm complicated!

I have not had any abdominal pain since but the theory is that the dissection may have healed now!

I'm due to commence the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program and further test all coming up within the next month. I am now forgetful and wondering if that's the medication.

I joined the Facebook group set up by Pamela McKenzie and know that I'm not alone.

Thanks to Pamela I am able to tell my story as the information you receive in hospital is generic for Heart patients and there wasn't anything specific for SCAD. While I was in hospital my family and I goggled the condition and discussed it with each other as that was the only info we could get.

Also with the amazing efforts of Pamela's hope that the medical world understands SCAD I am able to participate in the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute in the genetics of Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection. I feel this gives me reasoning as to why this happened to me, to help and educate others about SCAD.