

Early diagnosis makes all the difference – Allan's Story



Name: Allan Gavin - Age: 48 - Lives: Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Diagnosis: Allan tragically lost his Dad to Oesophageal Cancer in 2003 when he was just 50 years old. It was totally preventable had he known about the dangers of persistent Heartburn and acid reflux. He was diagnosed in the May of that year after having difficulty swallowing and died just a few months later in the December.

Allan felt lost and angry after the death of his father and had a turbulent few years. Then like history repeating itself, Allan also found himself suffering with Heartburn and acid indigestion. It wasn't uncommon for him to sleep with Gaviscon on his bedside table. An item that became regular on his shopping list. When Allan met Lois, a nurse who is now his wife, she was able to encourage and support him to take some action about his symptoms.

Lois confirmed that the way Allan was suffering wasn't ok or the norm. She questioned the persistent heartburn and in 2012 made Allan go to the Doctors. He was referred for an endoscopy and diagnosed with Barrett's Oesophagus a pre-cancerous condition. Allan was prescribed with a PPI Omeprazole and told to return in 5 years for another check despite telling them his dad's history. 5 years didn't leave Allan feeling very reassured. Allan's wife Lois was determined to find a better solution and did some investigation on line. Via a contact in Texas, it was suggested Lois get in contact with Professor Rebecca Fitzgerald at Addenbrookes's Hospital, Cambridge.

Thankfully Allan was seen in Cambridge and was included on a clinical trial. His Barrett's was more reassuringly checked annually by an endoscopy or by the cytosponge. (The cytosponge is currently being trialed with the view to helping detection in Primary care.) Feeling better about the surveillance he was under Allan went regularly for his annual checks until May 2018 when for the first time he was asked to return to the hospital for another appointment. As this was out of the ordinary Allan called to check if it was really necessary to go back. Being told it was, concerns started to cloud his thoughts. As he had feared a consultant advised that he had Stage 1 adenocarcinoma.

He and Lois were devastated. That dreadful sinking feeling when the rug has been pulled out from under your feet. They were reassured a little by the consultant who told them that this had been caught very early which was a really good thing. Within two weeks Allan was treated with radio ablation therapy. The treatment knocked Allan for six. After the second treatment three months later he was much more hopeful as he was told that the cancer hadn't penetrated the vascular layers. Allan returned every three months for checks and treatment. Things were looking hopeful in June 2019 and to Allan and Lois's great relief, it was confirmed on 5th December 2019 that Allan was in remission.

Allan is so thankful to his wife Lois, Professor Fitzgerald and Addenbrooks Hospital in Cambridge. He can't help but feel if he had listened to the first advice and only gone back for a Barrett's check after five years, his cancer wasn't present at that point so the process would have been to defer him for seven years! By which time his cancer would have grown undetected and he would potentially have missed the window for early diagnosis and successful treatment.

Association with HCUK:

Allan found out about HCUK when he was treated in Cambridge by Professor Rebecca Fitzgerald and her team. Rebecca is one of HCUK clinical trustees. Allan is passionate about doing something positive to raise much needed awareness and help change the future for others. Despite a great fear of heights Allan is challenging himself to do a skydive in aid of HCUK in July. He said the London Eye was a challenge but despite that is still determined to throw himself out of a perfectly good plane to raise money! A big thank you to Allan, we'll be there to support you.

If you would like to donate to Allan, his just giving details are as follows:

https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/allan-gavin?utm_campaign=pfp-share&utm_content=AllanGavin&utm_medium=fundraisingpage&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR3O_oYQ94xmHX932W7zKlX9VWNQf8wllg-xYEXMiE1vE9Y9u6jIBFSr49o



Call 01256 338 668
info@heartburncanceruk.org

