


Chapter 6

Martin's Story Post COVID-19: A Journey of Recovery

Pam Copeland

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2862-9364>
National Health Service, UK

ABSTRACT

Martin's story post COVID-19, written in his own words, introduces this chapter per the author and describes the patient's journey from admission in fast atrial fibrillation underpinned by COVID-19 pneumonitis to the complex trajectory of clinical management. The chapter closes having given insight into the physical and psychological impact that COVID-19 had on Martin and highlights how the combination of human determination and timely cardiac intervention has led to full recovery and a return to normal life.

MARTIN'S STORY DESCRIBING HIS JOURNEY POST COVID-19

Every time I encounter a struggle in life, I say to myself, "That won't get you up Ditchling Beacon." I always compare my current situation to that. Is this as tough as Ditchling? No. Well let's carry on then. I've done Ditchling three times in one day without stopping. I've gone from the car park, over Ditchling, down to the dual carriageway, back up against the headwinds and around again. 24 miles. Absolute torture. I did a gruesome, hilly mountain bike ride in Belmont Downs in Surrey last night, and I remember thinking, "Why am I doing this?" But then that epic feeling of euphoria got hold of me and I'm like, "Oh, yeah. This is why."

My time isn't quite as good as it used to be though, since I got Covid in August 2021. And I had it bad. When I got to the hospital my heart was racing at 226 bpm,

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in atrial fibrillation, very breathless, pneumonitis secondary to positive Covid and loss of memory. And I ended up on the most serious of heart tablets.

The past year has been doctor appointments. Blood tests. X-rays. Ultrasounds. Before, I wouldn't take anything even for a headache, but Covid has been completely humbling.

I've spent decades keeping fit and in just 2 weeks Covid took that all away and wiped me out. As though I had never been fit. You know when you're coughing so hard, your heart feels like it's going to explode? Consultants have said the only reason why I'm alive today is because I was so fit. To be able to deal with a heart rate like that in FAF. On the 10th January 2022, I underwent a DC Cardioversion and 6 months later I remain in sinus rhythm. Last night I didn't feel any of that. In fact, it was the best cycle ride I've done yet. My heart and breathing were totally normal. I put my recovery down to doing as much as I could do. It was more exercise, not less, that worked for me. Cycling helped me breathe deeper again and made my heart strong again. Now, I'm thinking of doing the London to Brighton Cycle Ride next year. I've done it for the last 30 years. And it includes Ditchling”.

Figure 1. Martin

Source: Martin's story and photo courtesy of patient with permission



CLINICAL BACKGROUND: MARTIN, 64-YEAR-OLD MALE, PRE COVID-19 JULY 2021

- Bricklayer, regular long distance cycling, weight training, drives van and motorbike
- Co-morbidity: mild asthma
- Medication: Nil; not vaccinated against Covid-19

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