

Introduction

◆ Profession

◆ Work

◆ Voluntary Connections

- Alzheimer's Society
- Dementia Group
- Medicine of the Person
- Church of England

Retirement

- ◆ I retired from the NHS on 31st May 2000
- ◆ I did a Part-time locum in Leeds for 5 months Oct.'04 to Feb.'05
- ◆ I gave up my private Psychotherapy Practice on 31st March 2007
- ◆ I still sit on Mental Health Review Tribunals – usually about 2½ days a week

Beginning of Problems

- ◆ While doing the locum I became increasingly depressed.
- ◆ I had financial worries which led me to do the locum.
- ◆ I was able to work but I had increasing episodes of feeling unable to cope outside work

Help with Depression

- ◆ Friends suggested that I had some counselling
- ◆ Gradually I recovered from the depression over about 3 months
- ◆ Although I was no longer significantly depressed I noticed that I was not functioning as before

Other problems

- ◆ Some tasks seemed more difficult and I became anxious about them
- ◆ I even had difficulty with running the home and cooking – an entirely new experience.
- ◆ I was less able to do simple arithmetic
- ◆ I had difficulty remembering routes and other visual things
- ◆ Sometimes I struggled to find words or wrong ones came out

What was wrong?

- ◆ I knew that I had a family history of cardio-vascular disease
- ◆ I had mild High Blood Pressure which was apparently controlled by medication
- ◆ I had noticed symptoms that I was used to looking for in my patients

What to do?

- ◆ I talked to two trusted friends and colleagues
- ◆ They agreed that if they felt as I did they would want to be assessed
- ◆ My husband supported me in my quest for professional advice

Visit to GP

- ◆ I went to see my GP
- ◆ I described my symptoms: **CHANGES**
 - Loss of previous good visual memory/sense of direction
 - Mental arithmetic deteriorated+ +
 - Word-finding problems and coming out with wrong or non-existent words
 - Poor multitasking – previously good

Referral to Specialist

- ◆ I was over 65 but there were difficulties about referral to local Psychogeriatrician
- ◆ I remembered that I knew the local neurologist well and we agreed that I would be referred to him
- ◆ He, after receiving the referral letter, immediately arranged a CT scan and neuro-psychological assessment

Investigations

- ◆ I had the CT scan in early August 2005
- ◆ I saw the psychologist for a first appointment, also in August
- ◆ On the Friday before the Bank Holiday weekend the neurologist phoned me
- ◆ He had seen the CT scan and it showed small vessel vascular changes
- ◆ He prescribed medications

A Diagnosis

- ◆ I knew from what I had been told that I have very early Vascular Dementia
- ◆ The detailed tests done by the psychologist confirmed this
- ◆ The test results tied in with my symptoms but I was still functioning in the damaged areas at low average levels.
- ◆ I started on medication

Reactions to the diagnosis:

Personal

- ◆ Adjusting to loss – bereavement/acceptance
- ◆ Subtle change in attitude to future
- ◆ Practical adjustments day to day:- Sat-nav for driving, more lists and planning
- ◆ Firmer decision to give up Private Practice as soon as possible

Reactions to the diagnosis: Personal Contd.

- ◆ Wish to give more time to talking about experience and helping projects rather than being Alzheimer's Branch Committee Chair
- ◆ Making sure I give time to what I enjoy and want to do
- ◆ Being open about the diagnosis

Reactions to the Diagnosis: Other people

- ◆ Two main types of reaction: from both friends and colleagues
 - 'We all have that – it's your age'
 - 'I've never been able to do that'
 - 'You are doing too much, you need to slow down'

OR

- Empathy, recognition of bereavement & loss

Reactions to the Diagnosis: Other people Contd.

- ◆ Surprising how many in the first group included close friends and colleagues
- ◆ To me this seemed dismissive of the implications of the reality which also seemed dismissive of me
- ◆ This seemed especially so with old friends from Medical School