

How Long Have I had This Tumour?

My name is Catherine. I first started having headaches in 1987, and at a time when I was going through a divorce. My doctor assumed they were caused by the stress I was going through. The headaches continued on for the next 5 years at which time I remarried. During the next 2 years, I began having aching gums, as well as neck pain, going up into my head behind my right ear. I lost my husband in 1993 to cancer, and still my doctor felt it was due to stress but sent me for a sinus CT scan because of the severe pain above my eyes.

A specialist I saw thought that I would benefit from bilateral sinus surgery which I had in 1997 or 1998. The surgery did not help. I started getting high blood pressure, osteoporosis and in 2001, I was diagnosed as a diabetic. You can imagine my frustration when in 2003, my jaws began paining as well. The pain in my head was like a ring of fire around my head and into my neck. I went to my doctor and insisted on more intensive testing.

A CT scan showed an enlarged sella and a further test was done with dye. There was a tumour on my pituitary gland. I got an appointment with the endocrinology clinic where blood work showed I had acromegaly. I met with an endocrinologist and a surgeon who advised that I have surgery.

My tumour was successfully removed [all of it] on May 16, 2004, and I have not needed medication or radiation to this day. I have had only one headache. I am also no longer diabetic. My thanks to all who helped me finally get back a decent life. The question is... Did this tumour begin in 1987, as I believe it did?

Clinical Pearls

- With the reduction in growth hormone levels, soft tissue swelling will become noticeably reduced and within time blood pressure will improve. Diabetes may improve, along with the headaches and increased sweating.
- Acromegaly is not hereditary. Men and women are equally affected by acromegaly. Most people are middle aged at the time of diagnosis.
- The first step to taking control is understanding.