

My Journey Began

My name is Debbie and my journey began roughly 10 years ago. My cousin was diagnosed with a thyroid condition and in order to get more information, she began checking the internet. In her quest she read about a condition known as acromegaly in which a person's appearance changes over time.

Recently she had noticed that I looked different from the last time she had seen me. She spoke to her mother about this and all of her sisters and they were in agreement. I looked different than I had ...something was changing and I didn't look like myself anymore.

They eventually spoke about this to my mother and family members and most just brushed it off as getting older and having babies and such.

In the interim, my marriage had broken up [emotions were chaotic] and I was changing everything. My feet and hands were getting bigger, and shoes and rings no longer fit me. I figured it was not just aging.

Then in 2005, I began working for a doctor. His secretary noticed over a few months that I wasn't looking well. I was grey in colour and losing weight. After weeks of coaxing I went for blood work and lo and behold my sugars were 27. My doctor began sending me for a battery of tests to figure out sugar levels then within 6 weeks they had it figured out.

The endocrinology department had me meet together with all of them and began relaying to me my condition. They said I had a pituitary tumour that was growing and had been there at least 10 years or more.

They were all in agreement that it was found at exactly the right time and that with skill and luck they could remove it and all symptoms would be corrected and/or stopped within a year of the surgery.

In the meantime I had to begin a course of weekly injections of a drug to shrink the tumour, while I was waiting to be admitted. This was a little difficult as I live alone and had never had anything like this before. But I did it and was none the worse for the wear. I had to take care of myself as though I was a diabetic: that took getting used to.

On January 27, 2005 the surgery was scheduled. The neurosurgeon and his excellent surgical team successfully completed the tumour removal with such precision, it was incredible. With quarterly and yearly rechecks, everything had completely healed, like the physicians told me, and now thankfully I am free of all symptoms.

I do have angels.

Clinical Pearls

- It is important to monitor pituitary function following surgery. Some patients develop an underactive pituitary (hypopituitarism) either due to the surgery or due to the tumour squeezing the pituitary gland. In these cases, patients will need replacement hormones. These may include hydrocortisone, thyroxine, testosterone or estrogen.
- Following diagnosis and treatment of acromegaly a commitment to lifelong follow up is essential. This includes blood tests, routine MRI's, and sometimes visual field testing.