

The Walls are Crooked

I am taking a few minutes to try to explain how my doctor discovered that something was wrong with me. First, let me say that it was my mother who said “How come your fingers and hands are so big recently?” I had to say “I don’t know”. It is some time since my feet and face were also swelling and I didn’t have a good answer at the time, but it is bugging me more and more. I will try to remember as much as I can.

Because I had lost my daughter in February 1995, I developed a major depression, and saw my family doctor every month. In probably July 2001, I had an appointment, and I was talking to her to let her know how I was feeling. She conducted a routine exam and when I came back from the change room, I put my hand on her desk. She suddenly asked me” Since when are your fingers and hands so big?” So we went back to the exam room and that is when she saw my face, looked at my feet and touched my fingers. She told me that I had to go see an endocrinologist, but did not know exactly what the cause of my condition was.

I was always dizzy, and found it impossible to climb on things. I was seeing the walls as kind of crooked. Lying down on my bed, I was feeling that it was higher on one side and lower on the other. The floor was sometimes very near or very far away. My migraines were more intense and one side of my head was worse than the other. I had visual problems also. I was scared, angry, and sad.

I was more and more tired, so I was napping more than usual. I was sometimes trembling or overtired for no reason. I had problems cleaning my house or doing my washing. Walking to the store for my groceries was really hard for me.

So in October 2001, I went to see the doctor who sent me for a scan. They found a mass but didn’t know for sure what it was. When I went back to the doctor, she asked for an MRI that time. The result was acromegaly, which resulted from a tumour in my brain, in my pituitary gland, close to my left eye. At least it was a benign and not a malignant tumour. But it was a scary diagnosis to receive.

So I started to go to a clinic where they gave me a needle of octreotide (Sandostatin® LAR®). Because I had to go there so often, I got fed up and asked the nurse if I was able to give myself the needles. That was unusual for me, because I hate needles. Now I don’t care anymore. I had to do that for five months, and at the last month, the doctor had to increase the dose, and I had to receive the needle, octreotide (Sandostatin® LAR®) in the office. This was to reduce the size of the tumour.

In between all this, I had met with the neurosurgeon, who was the doctor who operated on my brain in May 2002. So now it is six years later, and everything seems OK, at least for now. The operation went well, and I stayed in the hospital for 13 days. I was glad to wake up and see that I was alive. But a while after, I thought I was going to be sick, but

no, it was more than that. Instead it was blood coming out of my mouth. I was afraid, but the doctor on call explained to me that it was normal.

I had my nose packed and was in longer than usual, probably because of the blood. I am glad it is over.

I guess that I have told you everything. I am seeing an endocrinologist every two years, probably for the rest of my life.

So this is my story. Hope it will help others who are scared about a tumour or want to be informed about acromegaly.

Clinical Pearls

- Other tests done at the time of diagnosis may include colonoscopy, echocardiogram, and ultrasound of the abdomen.
- Regular dental examinations are important as well as yearly flu vaccination and a one-time pneumonia vaccine.