

My Journey Part 3 – Bulletin No 4 (23 February 2021)

I cannot believe how quickly time has gone since my last bulletin, people always say give a job to a busy person and they will not disappoint you, how true. Although in the last fortnight I would have been too busy to assist. As I sit down to put this bulletin together I have to regather my thoughts to see what has kept me so busy. Being busy is a wonderful attribute as it does not allow the mind to wander to issues that are not important for the time being. Actually I have not thought once about what my outcome might be with my next visit to the PAH on 22nd. What ever will be will be on issues which are outside of my control.

Past Two Weeks

The past two weeks have been littered with many visits to the GCUH (3 times), John Flynn Hospital (3 times for heart tests which have been on going), the cancer dentist (twice), blood tests, my GP and not forgetting my podiatrist intermingled with visits from my family, my sister and her husband from Nanango and friends from Brisbane. Yes I did find time for several games of bridge and to read the newspapers. Tennis has not been of interest as I like to be in bed by 7.30pm each night. Now I know where the time has gone.

Hospital Visit of Interest

As mentioned in my last bulletin I am have difficulty in eating solid food owing to my inability to swallow food, the reason for this is unknown at this stage but I believed it can be attributed to the 65 sessions of radiotherapy and whatever else might be taking place in my throat at the moment which as effected my glottis. Last week I had a session of swallow tests at the GCUH using fluoroscope technology which allowed speech therapists to watching what is taking place when I eat and drink. Food and drink was being diverted to my wind pipe which inhibited my ability to swallow food. Even drinking water whilst eating droplets of water could be seen entering my air ways. Problem now solved I now eat and drink water which has been thickened by the addition of a powder (Thicken Up) which actually assists the swallowing process and keeps food and water away from my wind pipe and lungs.

(The glottis is covered by a small flap of skin called epiglottis, This prevents the entry of food particles and fluid into the wind pipe and lungs while swallowing. If food enters the wind pipe it causes choking and may even result in the death of the person)

My voice is deteriorating and by the end of the day it is very hoarse and difficult to understand, some people might say that is one way to keep him quiet. Following an appointment with the speech pathologist I have been given a range of exercises which hopefully will preserve and perhaps improve my voice. Neil Raward without a voice what a terrifying thought.

Visit to PAH Hospital

Carole and I ventured to the PAH Hospital on Monday 22 February where my chemo oncologist Dr Rahul Ladwa gave us the results of my recent PET/CT scan after 4 months of immunotherapy and injections as part of the cancer trial program.

Why Not Prolong the Suspense

Dr Rahul welcomed Carole and I with his usual smile and warmth and after sitting down he said “Neil we are on the right track”. With that my pent up suspense dissipated. He told us that he was happy there had been no significant change in tumour size when compared to the October 2020 scan. After showing us the scans and discussing the outcome I went for my next infusion of immunotherapy my 5th of 12 sessions. Onwards and upwards

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life - Neil Raward