



## What Happened to Grainne's Unrelenting Pain??

As I sit at the breakfast bar to write this, looking out across the sea watching a ferry glinting in the early evening sun with a glass of wine next to me, it is incredible to think that seven days ago this one activity was impossible.

Due to excruciating pain in the left side of my back, not only could I not attempt to sit on a bar stool but the idea of a glass of wine was an impossibility due to the amount of painkillers I was taking; I was so agitated by the pain I could not even hold a pen or a glass. The turnaround was due to a series of events. But first let me tell you about the incredible journey which has changed my life.

If I am truly honest, I began to feel ill in December 2006. I put my tiredness and lack of energy down to stress of work. As the new year progressed, I suffered from bouts of severe cystitis, constant headaches, backaches, pains in my hands, continual lethargy, sore throats, loss of interest in myself, my appearance; my daily diet, and lack of enthusiasm for my home life. I was taking huge amounts of over the counter medicines for each attack of cystitis, headaches etc.

Each day was a strain on my physical ability to get out of bed, get dressed, and to perform my responsibilities at work as a special needs teacher. Meeting my own needs in my daily life was wrecked by pain, which never seemed to go away. Each school holiday was spent trying to catch up on work as well as trying to sleep to get rid of the awful lethargy. Even after the six-week break in the summer I felt more ill than I had at the end of the term. This continued until the very last Sunday in September 2007, when the pain in my back exploded. I shot out of bed as though someone had stabbed me in the back. I crawled on my hands and knees to the bath-room, where I was so violently sick that I thought I was dying from poisoning.

The next few hours my temperature rose and fell, I was nauseous, my head hurt, I couldn't stand up, and the pain was so bad, I laid as still as I could with my face down on my bed. In a haze I accepted the advice of going to A and E (Accident & Emergency) when an ambulance arrived. By then I was grey in the face and round the mouth, and sweat poured from me as I cried with the pain. My husband thought I was dying. We were in A and E for five hours, during which time an injection was given for the sickness and an unsuccessful injection of morphine was meant to dull the pain. A reaction to the dose resulted in muscular spasms, rendering me unable to move my hands or feet and barely able to talk. We thought I was having a stroke. I was frightened. The x-ray was clear, but it could have been a kidney stone that was not showing and as there was blood and protein in my urine, I was urged to go to my own doctor.

October and November passed in a haze of pain. Weekly doctor visits, antibiotics, painkillers, plenty of fluids, and bed-rest...but nothing shifted the pain. The pain remained constant, never lessening, changing or moving. Four x-rays, two dye-tests, and ultra- sound scans followed. I spent my 50th birthday in the hospital having a scan and waiting for other test results. There was nothing showing.

December brought blood tests; urine tests showed white blood cells, protein and blood. There was infection present. This meant stronger antibiotics and more painkillers. The urology department used a cystoscopy to look at my bladder. I spent Christmas Eve in an operating theatre having this procedure. I needed further investigation, which had to be carried out under general anaesthetic in the New Year. The nurses' wishes for me to have a happy Christmas really fell on deaf ears as the words "biopsy" blotted out everything else.

The pain continued as I tried to put on a brave face. Further investigation left me feeling that I now must have cancer. No. Everything clear. By now the pain was excruciating. Days blended into weeks. I spent good days on my sofa and bad days on my bed. The pain would build up over a few days from a nagging, niggling sensation to a severe stabbing pain. This was accompanied by high temperatures, dizziness and the worst ever sick feeling.

At worst I shuffled, at best I could put one foot in front of the other. However, which ever way I moved the steps aggravated the pain. I tried hot water bottles and hot baths to try to relax the pain, but it didn't work. I tried everything: Ibuprofen; paracetamol; antibiotics; panadol; cocodamol; but nothing would ease the pain. I was tired, in fact exhausted, agitated, miserable, depressed and very worried. I rarely slept longer than an hour at a time as any movement aggravated the pain. My crying in pain in what little sleep I had upset my husband.

Side effects of sickness, blurred vision, drowsiness, itching, palpitations, and headaches added to the discomfort. I cried. I lay in bed. I crawled on all fours to the bathroom. I was crazy with pain; in fact I began to believe that I was crazy. This must all be in my mind because no one could find anything wrong with me.

On good days I tried to appear normal, I dressed, I made visitors a cup of tea and tried to sit carefully in church so as not to cry with pain. I began to wonder if people believed how ill I was feeling. Did I look ill? I wasn't losing weight, which is the usual sign of severe illness. I looked pale but that's nothing to worry about during winter months. In April the C.T. Scan results were sent to my doctor. The results were "reassuring" according to the consultant's notes. So to date all results of everything were clear. My family doctor was totally baffled. We were now looking at the prospect of me having an undiagnosed pain. For life? The way forward? Pain control for life?

Morphine patches were the latest on offer. These gradually numbed the sharpness of the pain. They numbed my mind. I couldn't keep my head up long enough to sip water. My legs didn't belong to me and wouldn't let me get out of bed. I tried to keep my eyes open long enough to wave bye-bye to my boys in the morning. When I closed my eyes I felt as though someone was in the house. I couldn't open my eyes, I couldn't get out of bed. Could anyone hear me calling?

Was I hallucinating? Not only did I feel that I was about to become bedridden, I now was no longer in control of anything other than sleeping. Once my doctor knew the patches were not what I wanted and that I needed some quality of life, the next prescription was a dissolving tablet. I weaned myself off the patches and onto the tablets. I was able to focus during the day and sleep some of the night. But they did very little to dull the pain enough to let me be mobile. I was desperate. I was sick.

I was now unemployed from being absent from my temporary teaching post, the contract was not renewed due to lack of funding, which perhaps I could have put forward a case to allow me to continue with the Special Needs group I was teaching had I not been so ill. This just added to my misery. I was in pain, the worst possible pain. I cried, I felt so alone. Did anyone in the medical profession believe the severity of my pain? Someone was about to.

Throughout my confinement, which was how it felt, I had regular phone calls from my Aunt Pat. Sometimes I was able to answer the phone to say I was in bed and on the occasions I spoke to her, my pain was evident in my voice. There was no hiding the fear that this was how I was going to spend the rest of my life. She shared my despair. Then an opportunity arose that was to change my life. Aunt Pat and Uncle Paul were due a visit to Dundee, Scotland. Their trip needed to be postponed for a week. They have a neighbor who is a Bio Cranial Specialist. He needed a pipe fixed in his home and Paul was able to sort it and whilst doing so they got chatting.

On hearing about me in my pain and desperation at being forced to face the possibility of living on painkillers, Paul asked him if he could help. However, I was in England and my Aunt and Uncle were in Ireland. He was due to go on holiday in about a week's time & explained that he thought it possible he could help but would need to see me first. Because of traveling issues between England & Ireland, he suggested a concentrated series of treatments over a week. I would be staying with Paul and Pat. The doctor also explained to Paul that he would have a good idea if we were being successful within 4 to 7 days.

Time was precious. To be told someone may be able to help when you are in the depths of despair is an overwhelming feeling. Could a trip to Ireland help? This was the most hope I had been given in the months I had suffered. Suddenly I was packing a bag and flying the next day.

Pumped up with painkillers, I arrived in Belfast. I was weary, in pain, and frightened that I might suddenly collapse again, but I was hopeful. In fact, I had every faith in what I had been told to expect. I knew Pat and Paul had faith in what they were telling me about his treatment. That Wednesday night I sat in the exam room. The doctor asked for as much information as possible and as I began to unfold the tale of woe I realised just how ill I had become. I had the first treatment and was totally unaware of what to expect as he began working on my head and the back of my neck. But I had every confidence that if there was nothing there to treat I knew he would say so. What I was not expecting was that after 40 minutes of listening to me and carrying out the Bio Cranial procedure, he would say that he thought it possible that I was suffering from spasms of the left ureter.

He demonstrated how the ureter was a tube which connected the kidney to the bladder and how it would be going into spasm, possibly over a few days before completely closing. Adding also that there was severe inflammation. This was the cause of the severe and often sudden stabbing pain as it closed up. This also explained how some days the pain was worse than others. This was unlikely to show on any x-rays or scans and indeed when I was relaxed under anaesthetic the tube would also be relaxed.

I was dumbfounded. Not only did someone believe I was in great pain but he knew how severe it was, where it was, and how he could treat it. I later sat with Pat and Paul and we cried. I was not imagining it! My illness was real. More importantly it could be treated. There was hope!

A plan for five more visits were arranged. I needed to stop taking the painkillers and let the treatments allow my body to get rid of the months and months of drugs. My body needed to heal itself. That night I slept all night. Not once did I wake up. When I woke up in the morning I was lying on my left side. Over the past nine months this had been impossible.

Throughout the day and after my next visit I didn't take any painkillers. My second treatment left me with a warmth so deep it was like having my hot water bottle on the inside. The pain was there but not as sharp and I was the most mobile I had been since September 2007.

Every time I spoke to family and friends I cried. These tears were not tears of pain as they had been just a few days ago, but they were tears of hope. The hope that these treatments were working! The hope that I going to get better! This hope was overwhelming.

On Friday morning I woke up to the sun shining and no stabbing pain. It is hard to explain how wonderful it was to be able to get out of bed, walk to the bathroom, dress, and have breakfast. For so long my bedroom had been a prison cell. A depression had overshadowed me and due to the severity of the pain, I stayed in my house. Now, after three visits, I was walking along the beach and I felt so free.

Night time became a pleasure. Snuggling down for sleep was a luxury. Before my treatments I would lie crying quietly in the dark praying for my misery to end, often shuffling into the bathroom where I sobbed into bath towels in excruciating pain. After my third treatment I was sleeping like a baby.

Saturday morning I bounced out of bed and was showered, dressed, had breakfast and the bed made before my nine am appointment. The feeling of glass sticking in my back had dulled to an ache; this ache was the inflammation. The doctor and his wife could see the difference in my face and my whole body re-aligned. My body was healing itself due to the intense treatments.

I felt alive. I felt I was going to stay alive. Yet this time a week ago I was in so much pain that death would have been a relief. Now my aunt and I can shop until we drop and then some! Being so ill had made any visits or shopping spree a thing of the past and most certainly not something to look forward to. Suddenly I am strolling round IKEA, Marks and Spencers, and Donaghadee Garden Centre. I was able to sit in a coffee shop and watch the world go by as I drank the first frothy coffee in months.

Last Christmas had passed me in a blur of pain, after effects of the general anaesthetic and antibiotics. This Christmas will see me whizzing through Santa Grottoes and roasting the turkey! My new doctor had given me hope for the future. On Sunday morning I woke up late, a good night's sleep saw me look forward to a day of rest.

Sitting in the sun listening to the waves eased the niggles of my pain. I did feel a bit sore but I could live with that. This was the inflammation my doctor had talked about and it would take some time to heal. A phone call home and I learnt that my Vicar and church friends were enthralled with my news. My husband assured them I was now doing fine and was beginning the recuperation; they in turn were assured that their months of devoted prayers were being answered.

The Monday treatment was so relaxing, I almost nodded off! The sharpness had now gone completely. I kept waiting for it to return. I found myself moving carefully just in case I aggravated it. After nine months of the intense pain, I could now put my hand on the spot where the pain used to be. I could sit on the treatment bench and not flinch when the doctor touched that spot. I felt so well I cried with relief.

The Tuesday treatment was my last. It was incredible. I had shuffled pale and in pain into my shoulders straight, and seven days ago. Today I walked, with back knowledge and safe, shouldered straight, and no longer hunched up in pain. Safe in the knowledge and safe in the belief that as from today I will be getting better, stronger, and healthier with each passing day. Why? Because of my new doctor and his wonderful Bio Cranial System.

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