

A Most devastating Illness

By Barry Pankhurst

Being diagnosed at any age with Alzheimer's or any other type of Dementia is devastating for both the person and their family when you're suddenly and without warning faced with an entirely unwanted new way of life and the realization that nothing will be the same way for you again...

Obviously I can't speak for other people who have been diagnosed, but when I was first told... it was as though a judge, without jury, had committed me to the death sentence... the only difference being in that for some people or criminals waiting on death row at least there is the chance of a stay of execution but with Alzheimer's or any other type of dementia there is no such reprieve... although I'm sure we all say exactly the same thing in that (I'm not dying from dementia... I'm living with dementia) but the fact still remains that as of yet it's an incurable illness and without any signs of a cure within the foreseeable future and an illness that still requires a great deal more understanding by the general public towards its ultimate consequences on the person, spouse and family...

Recently someone asked me 'How would I best define Dementia' to which I replied, it's like an almighty Tsunami crashing onto your once tranquil shores bringing with it all the weight of its devastation and leaving a trail of flotsam and jetsam behind it that our spouse has to cope with 24 hours a day throughout the year during its course, and not only that, the distress continues for our spouse even after our demise as they have to try and pick some pieces of a new life that's shrouded in loving memories...

Maybe you think that's a strange analogy... but given the fact that to-date there are well over +/- 30 million people worldwide that have some type of Alzheimer's or Dementia with the numbers drastically increasing 'year by year' then it's tuning into a worldwide Tsunami of which no country is unscathed... yet still so many people think our illness is just a matter of forgetting things "Which is definitely not the case" as the list of daily problems we must fight against within our illness are never-ending such as the disorientation, obsessions, a sense of emptiness within body and mind, and the loneliness even though our spouse and family are with us, Sundowning which can have the most traumatic affect on a person with dementia, horrendous nightly nightmares that can have you screaming and limbs kicking out fighting to wake up thus causing your spouse to have many a restless night and possible become irritable (Not with you 'but' with the condition and lack of other peoples understanding) the list goes endlessly on and on...

But not only that, as our condition slowly deteriorates so does our bodies immune system become less resilient in fighting other unwanted illnesses that seem to follow along with Dementia like a plague such as influenza, phenomena, bladder infections, osteoarthritis and even cancer 'to mention just a few' which then adds even more uncertainties within our daily life and causes even more catastrophic distress to our spouse and family...

A cure for this terrible illness must be found, although maybe 'Cure' is the wrong word to use (better we say) "Eradicated" so that Alzheimer's and dementia become part of the ancient volumes of medical history only to be read by future generations... rather than them having to experience it...

Thoughts by Barry Pankhurst

“Yet” the pathway of life can be long! “YET” also sometimes short... so pray take heed of a now much wiser man who had never even considered the possibility of this illness befalling him and remember (You never know what’s round the next corner in life) it might just be Alzheimer’s or some other type of Dementia waiting to creep up behind you as its next victim...

Barry Pankhurst

“A victim of ‘Mixed Dementia’ Alzheimer’s, LBD, and Parkinson’s disease”

(Alzheimer’s has become my mother of intent in broadening its awareness)