

My Meniere's Story

~ Julieann's story - a glimpse of an extraordinary journey ~

IN 1995, I was frustrated with the constant feeling of having a blocked left ear, like I had been swimming and still had water in my ear canal. Except, I hadn't been swimming. I went to my GP, who promptly sent me to an ENT. *And so started my long vestibular journey...*

With the symptoms of long violent episodes of vertigo, fluctuating hearing and tinnitus, my ENT sent me for tests - MRI, hearing, VEMP, Caloric, electrocochleography (ECOG), auditory brainstem response (ABR), and balance tests -

Yes ... I definitely had Meniere's disease.

So sorry. No cause. No cure. Here's some stemetil and a diuretic. No salt.

One night, after a particularly bad vertigo episode, and yet another trip to the hospital emergency department, I vowed I would do whatever I could to help find a cure for Meniere's disease. I didn't know how, I just knew I wanted to help.

As time progressed, I spiralled into the dark depths chained to the Meniere's monster, desperately searching for hope that my life was going to get better. 11 years after my first Meniere's symptom, I had gentamicin injected into my middle ear that would make the world of difference for me. Life is a million times so much better without vertigo, or the fear of having a vertigo attack...

However, *In 2013*, I had to make the difficult decision to leave the career I loved with a passion - teaching. It broke my heart, but it opened the door to allow me to reach out a hand to Meniere's sufferers.

They say Meniere's takes everything from you, except those who love you. However, I can tell you that MD gave me a weapon - the ability to use my writing to raise money to donate to find a cure.

In 2013, I wrote *Vanilla Swirl* - a picture book about a little girl with a mum who has MD. 100% proceeds from sales are donated to Meniere's Research Fund at the Sydney University. It has an amazing global story of its own, but I don't have the space to share it with you here. My eternal thanks go to illustrator, *Shez Kennington*, from New Zealand, who also has MD.

In 2013, I volunteered as a research subject at the *University of Queensland* in the Neurological, Ageing and Balance Research Centre (NAB), when they put out the call for participants needed for research with Meniere's Disease, investigating neck proprioception and its influence on balance and relationship to vestibular function in people with definite unilateral vestibular loss. I'll never forget their excitement when I told them I'd destroyed my balance cells with gentamicin!

In 2015, I volunteered at the University of Qld as a research subject once again, as they investigated a novel treatment for Meniere's symptoms. The study involved playing specialised games with a virtual reality headset, in addition to a number of other non-invasive tests that looked at balance and verticality.

Also that year, I wrote *Blueberry Swirl* - a picture book about a little boy with a dad who has MD - again 100% proceeds are donated to medical research.

In 2017, I finally started to work on my 7th novel - *The Colour of Broken* - this novel kept nudging me to write it for two years prior, but I wasn't emotionally ready to do it. It was undoubtedly the hardest novel I had ever written.

But I finished it, and it was published under my pen name.



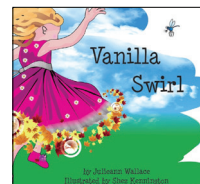
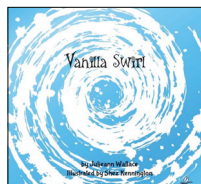
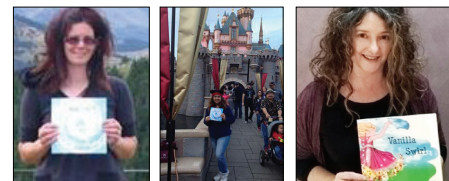
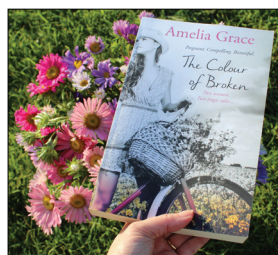
On March 28, 2018, I globally released the print book and eBook of *The Colour of Broken* (*The Color of Broken* is the US version). This book is the **BIG ONE** for us Meniere's Warriors to raise awareness for Meniere's disease, and also to donate 100% of profits for medical research at MRFL.

For the future, I'll keep on searching, researching, and writing. **It's time to find a cure!** - Julieann Wallace

(Books are available at online bookstores, or Lilly Pilly Publishing)



Dr Prosper Meniere's great, great, great grand-daughter, Terence Meniere, with a copy of Vanilla Swirl. (left)



Vanilla Swirl cover 2013, & the present cover