

“Bruce and Juliet”

Some of you may know that Bruce Kirkpatrick OAM started the Meniere’s Research Fund because he wanted to find out more about Meniere’s Disease.

The Meniere’s Research Fund was a not for profit fund raising group established in 2001. It was established for the sole purpose of supporting research into Meniere’s disease at Sydney Medical School, the University of Sydney.

This laboratory is the first in the world dedicated entirely to Meniere’s Disease.

We can all thank Bruce for his tireless fundraising efforts to support Meniere’s research.

Why did Bruce start the fund? *Because of Juliet!*

My Story: Juliet

“Perhaps this is what it’s like to faint”, I thought, sitting down after some mild gardening. My head felt “different” and faintly giddy. I didn’t faint, but the same sensation, and more pronounced, happened again over the next few days. I went to my GP. He gave a few vague suggestions about what it “might be”, ending with “it could be Meniere’s Disease”.

What that meant was not explained nor followed up - a common reaction among medicos.

Then I was aware of mild deafness in one ear. Two “specialists” produced neither a firm diagnosis nor relief from the “symptoms” - the **sudden** nausea, giddiness as the world rolled around and often vomiting as well.

Then someone suggested the hearing and balance clinic at St. Vincent’s. There, Celene McNeill made a definite statement about my having Meniere’s and suggested I ring the Meniere’s Support Group. What could a “support” Group do to help me when specialists couldn’t, I thought? But Celine’s quiet but firm tone of voice encouraged me - not expecting much after the useless run-around from the medical fraternity.

Anne and Denise Venturi spoke to me and suggested I see Professor Bill Gibson. It was unexpected and marvellous that someone understood Meniere’s and what I was going through. Until then it was hard for the family to understand what these sudden “attacks” meant when I would be perfectly normal one minute and on the floor the next. And until then, I was still driving; maybe I kept thinking, “It won’t happen again”. How ridiculous can one be?

The Prof thought I looked pretty awful and operated on my left ear in 1999 removing the endolymphatic sac with 2 days in hospital.

The first bad Meniere's attacks were awful physical events and particularly frightening. I wondered how long they would last (in fact some hours) - and, of course, I didn't realise then that they would become a bit more tolerable when the initial fear of the unknown was largely eliminated).

Incidents I remember were different in place and time. Once I called a doctor and crawled to unlock the door. I knew there was nothing he could do. I just wanted someone to BE there. I think he gave me a Stemetil injection, (the standard response. (A mind and brain specialist had agreed that I had Meniere's disease but his "treatment" was to give myself an injection. He had no conception that a Meniere's attack leaves one unable to DO anything- let alone self-administer injections.)

As a passenger driving to Bowral one night, the oncoming headlights had their effect. Pulling to the roadside and disrupting traffic meant the police soon turned up; an explanation from Bruce about Meniere's left them bewildered. I became OK later but the next morning I fell head first to the floor. Someone caught me and after an hour on a sofa, I recovered.

An intended night at the Opera only got as far as the lobby when I felt an attack coming on. Bruce alerted staff and a wheel chair got me to our car. Not a bad attack no vomiting in the car.

In one hotel I called the staff to get me a bucket or receptacle; explanation that I had Meniere's disease but did *NOT* need a doctor produced disinterest and not a flicker of compassionate help.

After the operation, the attacks gave me some warning - maybe 3-4- minutes - until the Professor put me on Stugeron. Then, quite suddenly, after some months (probably into years) I felt I didn't need it any more I was in the burnt out stage and haven't had an attack since.

There have been some changes in Research, which I shared early last year. Dr Daniel Brown who headed the research team left for a position at Curtin University, Perth, WA. Daniel continues his interest in Meniere's disease at Sydney University as a visiting Research officer and is collaborating with those working in this research.

Your donations will enable Meniere's research to continue the valuable work they are doing.

To make a donation :

<http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/foundation/gifts/index.php>