

Life with Alzheimers

Like most of the population, prior to 2003, [REDACTED] and I had very little experience or knowledge of Alzheimers Disease. [REDACTED] had just decided to finish teaching Key Stage 1 at a local Infants School and I was 36 years into a teaching career in the local comprehensive school, spending most of my time with disaffected teenagers in Key Stage 4.

The first signs that anything was wrong we laughed off. [REDACTED] always read the map really well on our annual pilgrimage to France, and when she started spinning the book through 360° we just put it down to the French altering their roads without telling anyone. Angela had never been a really enthusiastic driver but as she now didn't have to use the car to go to work, her lack of driving at first went unnoticed.

It took the best part of a year for us to put these initial signs together before we went to see our doctor, something we rarely did. [REDACTED] has never been a complainer, she was a regular blood donor and didn't attach any real significance to these early signs.

Our GP referred us to the psychiatric nursing service and we duly went for an appointment with a nurse. This process actually lasted in excess of a year without reaching any sort of conclusion. In fact the appointments just stopped without a summary or conclusion being reached. It was at this point, with [REDACTED] exhibiting more acute symptoms, that we were referred to [REDACTED]. Following extensive tests and appointments we received the chilling news in November 2006, that [REDACTED] was showing symptoms of Early Onset Alzheimers Disease.

From this point onwards we have pursued what has at times, seemed an almost vertical learning curve in order to cope with [REDACTED] advancing symptoms. It was in November 2008, that, following [REDACTED] declining scores in the tests administered by Dr [REDACTED] and his team, that he asked if we would become involved in a 'Drugs Trial'. Based upon her scores it was becoming questionable how much longer [REDACTED] would be prescribed her daily 10mg of Aricept and this trial would test Aricept alongside another drug called Ebixa. Being open-minded and keen to help where we could we opted to take part in the trial.

The upshot of that decision was that [REDACTED] was placed in what was effectively, the control group, receiving the double placebo dosage. This we only discovered when, due to the symptoms which [REDACTED] began to show some 5 weeks into the trial, our GP was so worried that he contacted Dr [REDACTED] and between them they decided to break the confidential code in order to discover exactly what [REDACTED] was receiving. Once her 10mg was restored [REDACTED] fairly quickly regained all that she had lost since the start of the trial.

That was 16 months ago. [REDACTED] symptoms have gradually advanced to the point that now she is completely incontinent and would not register a score on any of the tests administered by the specialist. In the last 3 or 4 weeks, she has started to not want to take her medication, and as a result has missed 4 or 5 pills. I expect this to continue with the result that [REDACTED] symptoms advance at an even faster rate than they have been. She is booked to go into a care home next week for what is initially a 'respite' break. However such has been her recent decline, that I can genuinely foresee that the care which I have been able to offer her at home, is no longer adequate to serve her needs.

I am approaching a very sad day

C.J HILL.