



Hydrotherapy Benefits and Afib

By Ian McLaren

As a relative newcomer to the afib scene, I would like to pass on a positive experience which seems to have resulted in a cure for the disorder – at least in my case. I first experienced afib in April 2006 shortly after my 75th birthday. I had been to a local beach for a swim, and was dismayed to find that I was huffing and puffing after swimming only 50 meters or so. It may have been something to do with a couple of bouts of anemia I had experienced a year or two earlier caused, I believe, by long-term use of aspirin following an angioplasty. The afib episodes didn't occur in a series, but simply arrived and stayed, more or less constant after diagnosis. After being referred by our GP to a cardiologist I was placed on a regime of strictly monitored doses of warfarin (Coumadin), digoxin (Sigmaxin) followed by Isoptin (verapamil). When these didn't work, Aratac 200 (amiodarone) was added to the cocktail. Simultaneously I was taking Losec (omeprazole) for a suspected leaking blood vessel, and Lipitor for something else. It was all rather confusing. There were periods of modest improvement, but overall the pulse remained erratic and sometimes fast – up to 110 beats per minute. I despaired of regaining the active life I had enjoyed up until then. Further medications were prescribed, and within a few months I was taking five or six daily. Two electrical cardioversions were carried out, neither of which restored correct rhythm for more than 24 hours. The medications were not only failing to correct matters, but seemed to be producing bad side effects. Something else needed to be done.

Whilst by no means a health freak, I have had a lifelong interest in Yoga, martial arts, and other philosophies which advocate self-help. I lacked the energy to do Yoga, however, I came upon a book by American Dr Frederick M Rossiter, entitled *Water for Health & Healing*. It described various ways in which water may be used to promote health, including the use of hot and cold showers for improving the heart and blood circulation. Whilst I observed no direct reference to afib, it occurred to me that if electrical cardioversions were supposed to shock the heart into correct rhythm (with a success rate of only 50%) it seems maybe the shock of switching from hot to cold water during a shower would have a similar effect. My first experimental attempt convinced me of the possibility, as it is certainly a heart-stopping experience, especially in the middle of a Tasmanian winter with temperatures not far above freezing. The trick is to run the hot water as high as can be tolerated, then turn it completely off and run fully cold for maybe 20 seconds or so, then back to hot, then cold again. Two or three bursts of this are usually enough, finishing with cold water. It feels great when you finish.

After going through this ceremony twice a day for a week or two I began to feel an improvement, and cut back to once a day, while continuing to take the medications. Within a month I found my pulse running at a steady 72 beats per minute and felt confident enough to begin dispensing with the medications, one at a time in the order they had been prescribed until I was using only warfarin. I gave that up last September when it became obvious that it was responsible for the internal bleeding. In place of the warfarin I now take 1000 IU vitamin E daily, vitamins C and B complex, use lots of garlic, and eat a largely

vegetarian diet. The pulse has stayed regular except for a period when I had a bad cold. The stress of this apparently put it back into afib, however, when I resumed the hot and cold showers (no they were NOT responsible for the cold!) it regained normal rhythm.

It is now more than six months since I used any medications, and the afib, if not entirely cured, at least is not a bother any more. Any undue stress seems to upset the rhythm, but nowhere nearly as badly as at the beginning, and it soon settles down. The bad side effects, including internal bleeding, went away with the medications. I have no idea whether hot and cold showers will work for everyone – they may even be risky for some, but I would be happy if others managed to escape this dreadful condition without using drugs.

November 2007

P.S. The “beast” returned a few weeks ago and has so far refused to respond to the hot/cold showers. It appears to have been triggered by a virus. A little disappointing after 14 months virtually symptom-free and no medications! Anyway, I am persevering.

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