



My Journey: A Happy Ending

By Mark Murphy, MD

My journey with LAF began with my first episode in September of 1997. I had been in excellent health up until this point. In addition, I routinely engaged in aggressive physical exercise. In any event, over time I began to develop recurrent episodes of PACs. These would occur after a heavy meal, or strenuous exercise. I did not give this much thought until these episodes degenerated into bursts of atrial fibrillation. I went to see a cardiologist who suggested that I take digoxin and not worry about it.

The episodes worsened and the discomfort, which included lightheadedness, dizziness, and extreme anxiety prevented me from working at my medical practice. My own research into this disease led me to begin regimens of various other medications. I first tried beta-blockers without success and the side effects, which included fatigue and decreased exercise tolerance precluded their use. Calcium channel blockers also failed. The more exotic antiarrhythmics including flecainide and propafenone helped only transiently and were associated with intolerable side effects.

I now realized I had to actively seek out some way of dealing with this disease process. I began to travel the country and interview electrophysiologists who were truly familiar with the pathophysiology of LAF. It seemed that a cure was a real possibility if the site of origin could be located and ablated with RF. I finally decided on an electrophysiologist in Provo, Utah. Although various centers around the country were performing the procedure and doing more research and development than this individual, I felt that his clinical skills offered me the best hope for a cure. In February of 2000, I underwent the procedure. It required one night's stay in the hospital and minimal discomfort. There was some associated chest soreness and groin pain from the catheter insertion sites. My postoperative course was complicated by one episode of AF, but after that time all ectopy gradually diminished and I was able to wean myself off all medications. I would say it took about three months to feel completely normal and without fear of going into AF.

I now feel as if I have my life back and could not be more grateful. I went from having episodes of AF every other day to now being in perfect normal sinus rhythm. My exercise routine is back to normal. I have regained fifteen pounds of lean weight that was lost secondary to side effects of medications. My only hope is that there would be a greater public and patient awareness of this nasty disease. I firmly believe a routine cure will be found in the near future, if the electrophysiologists who are actively ablating LAF are given credibility and support. As it is now, the experienced EPs are pushing a 90% success rate. This website provided me with tremendous hope throughout my journey with LAF, and Hans, I would like to thank you very much.

Arizona - October 2002

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