

November/December  
1997 Issue

# The Pancreatitis Supporters

## This Issue:

**Introduction and what has been happening in the Network.**

**Life Story by a member from whom, I am sure, a lot of us can relate!**

**Poetry Page.**

**Television stories - EastEnders and the poor image that Pancreatitis has! What a suprise!**

**Benefits Worry. Have any of you heard about this trend?**



**Y**et again we are rushing towards the Christmas period with all the hazards it can pose for us with Pancreatitis! I am sure you will all agree, with our alcohol biased society, that it is bad enough refusing drink throughout the year but that the pressure increases over the Christmas period. Never mind the hidden alcohol in puddings etc. and the odd idiot who would spike your drink at the works Christmas party! So the message in all this? Try and enjoy your Christmas despite any of the pressure from those around you.

**S**o, what can I tell you about all that has been happening since the last time I wrote? Well, we have contacts with the Manchester Royal Infirmary Support Group Chairman - Phil Muncaster and their treatment Bioantox. To further our understanding we have met with the Technical Marketing Manager and the Managing Director of Pharma Nord - the manufacturers of Bioantox and they have agreed to supply us with an information pack on their product and also agreement to post this on our Internet site. This will mean we have a print and an Internet version for those of you outside the United Kingdom.

**A**gain we have to give thanks to Mr and Mrs Carse for their donation of £50. This they gave in leui of the charities which were benefiting from the sad death of Princess Diana and we thank them

for their thoughtfulness. Also thanks to Steve Carse and Pat Spence for their selling of goods to the tune of £100.

**A** really big thanks to all of those who rejoined the Network, your membership gives us the money to produce the Newsletter! Welcome also to those of you who joined us this year and hoping that we will have a long and mutually helpful relationship.

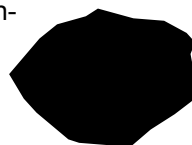
**I**n the past I have mentioned members wanting to write to others with Pancreatitis and have always asked that you put this request in writing. This is to cover us under the Data Protection Act if you are willing to have your address printed. We do

not release phone numbers as we ask people who write to ask for this. We have two people wanting to start up a pen friend relationship with someone else with Pancreatitis and I hope you will all feel able to drop them a line. They are as follows:

Sandra Tyrrell  
5 Hillview Cottages  
Shotton Dane Road  
Margate  
Kent  
CT9 4NE

and

Valerie Morris  
56 Rectory Road  
Basingstoke  
Hants  
RG27 9JQ



I read your news letters and the stories with great interest, there were so many familiarities I must admit to having tears in my eyes. To think I was not alone, and there are other people who have gone through the same experiences as I have, "how I feel for them". I know you will want to know a little bit about me and I will gladly tell you my experience of Pancreatitis.

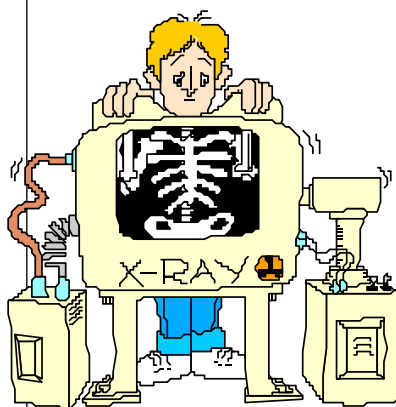
I had a history of stomach pain, my GP had been treating me for a duodenal ulcer for about 6 years, I had about three barium meal (oral) x-rays. I do remember when I was 14, I had sever stomach pain the type of pain I now know to be Pancreas related.

It was Spring 1977, I am 23 years old, I had been married for 6 months and living with my wife's parents, when on the morning I was getting ready for work, on leaving the bathroom the pain started, I collapsed to the floor in agony, I can't remember vomiting at first but when I did vomit it was a yellow bile, I could not get comfortable and the pain was unbearable, my wife called a doctor to come and see me when he could, that was to be about two hours later, the attack started at about 7am and the doctor called about 8.30am, for the

next two hours I was rolling about on the floor in agony, vomiting in well placed containers.

My wife had reluctantly gone to work leaving me in the capable hands of her mother, I remember the pain being so bad at times that I thought of getting a knife and cutting out the offending pain site. You will no doubt know what I mean, you will also know that the pain is so severe that you can't get comfortable.

With me it was curling up in a little ball, then stretching out as long as possible, then moving around house from room to room, at the same time vomiting, sometimes you would vomit



a little bile, but more often you would just retch, I was told I looked terrible. Eventually my doctor came, he examined me give me some pills and a sick note for a week. I honestly don't know what he said was wrong with

me, it must be because he was treating for an ulcer he thought the pain would go away. His visit lasted only about five minutes.

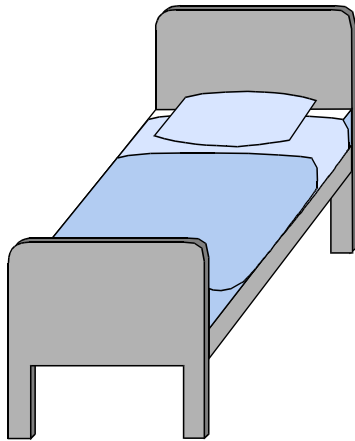
My wife came home for her dinner about noon and I was still rolling about in agony, to say she was worried would be an understatement, she again reluctantly went back to work at 1pm. I spent the afternoon much the same as I did the morning. When my wife came home at 5.30pm she was shocked to see me in such a state, she quickly phoned the doctor out again, he came about 7pm took one look at me and called an ambulance for me, before 8pm I was in the operating theatre where the surgeon opened me up had a look inside me and closed me up again I had haemorrhagic Pancreatitis, I was in intensive care for three days then I woke up to find they had put pipes and tubes in me, I can't remember much about the first week at all, I do remember people looking at me and I couldn't speak.

That was my first visit to hospital with a pancreas complaint of any kind, then in 1982 I went to my GP for a repeat prescription for pethadine tablets, when my doctor asked me if I was OK I told him as I usually did that my stomach hurt a little, (I have never been

overweight usually 10 stone give or take 4lb and my height is 5ft 6in. So when a lump appeared on my stomach it was easily spotted, but I must admit to ignoring this one, it started of the size of an egg and ended up as big as my fist and I don't know why I chose to ignore it but I did). Usually he (the doctor) would give me my prescription and let me go but this day he decided to examine me, on doing so he found the lump which was an abscess on the pancreas. So I had to have surgery again.

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have not worked as a welder since 1982, I believe the fumes that are inhaled are a cause of irritation to my pancreas. (A welder friend of mine agrees, he is a parks gardener in Australia now). After my operation in 1982 I went on the sick for some months, whilst I was on sick I was made redundant. I then went on invalidity in 1983 and other than the DHSS messing me about I remained on invalidity until 1987 when a friend got me a job as a watchman, I work three twelve hour night shifts on and six days off, and I get paid £20 more than invalidity. The job is really a desk job no heavy lifting.

There is the fact that I am from a working class background, and went into working men clubs from an early age, you could say I worked hard and I played hard. I have never been a big eater, so meals tend to be little and infrequent, to this day I may go up to three day's without eating if my stomach is bad.

I drank quite a lot of beer with my work mates, and the friends I socialised with. I played darts for two or three different pub and club teams, some nights I would have three matches to play in three different pubs or clubs over a 30 mile area. In my peak just before 1977 "my first attack" I was paid the equivalent of 6 pints for every match. (It hurts me to recall my past Jim) You can see why, I had won or came second in every darts league in my area, my house was full of trophies, cups and so on, all my friends either worked with me or they played darts with me. After my first attack the doctors told me to stop drinking, and not to put weight on and I should be OK, I was also told that I may become a diabetic, the latter never happened.

As I said all my social life was in a pub or club, so when I got well I went back to that environment and tried to carry on as before but without the drink! "It did not work" I could not play darts to my usual high standard, and my "friends" drifted away, some went on to get married, but some who drank as I did, went on drinking and I could not mix with them, we seemed to have different views of life, and a different sense of humour, I just could not mix with drunks.

My doctor is new to the practice, the doctors who know me have all retired. I have learnt more about Pancreatitis from reading books, thankfully you have given me a lot more information now.

*(Please note: we do not recommend this eating pattern! - Editor)*



# Particularly appropriate poetry!

## The Touch of a Friend

I was frustrated, discouraged  
It seemed like the end,  
What stopped me from quitting  
The touch of a friend

My life fell in pieces that  
I could not mend,  
What helped me redeem it,  
The touch of a friend

I needed someone with  
Strength they could lend  
And my prayer was answered  
By the touch of a friend

God grant me compassion  
That I may serve man  
Let me give where is needed  
The touch of a friend



## HUGS

It's wondrous what a hug can do,  
A hug can cheer you when you're blue.  
A hug can say, "I Love You so,"  
Or, "Gee, I hate to see you go."

A hug is, "Welcome back again"  
And "Great to see you!" or  
"Where've you been?"

A hug can soothe a small child's pain  
And bring a rainbow after rain.

The Hug! There's just no doubt about it,  
We scarcely could survive without it.  
A hug delights and warms and charms,  
It must be why God gave us arms.

## More EastEnders insults

EASTENDERS recently insulted Irish People with their crass representation of the Irish.

I am furious that they are running a story of a man with Pancreatitis drinking himself to death. Drink is not the only cause of Pancreatitis. Children are in our organisation!

Recently a lady rang with a sad story. Her husband had died and she didn't want Pancreatitis to appear on the death certificate because of EastEnders.

We have written to EastEnders and have yet to receive a full reply. I implore them to employ writers who know what they are talking about.

How can we fund-raise with people believing this nonsense?

Elizabeth Armour

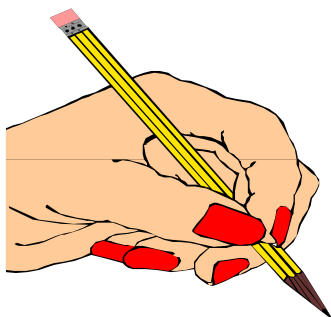
Secretary

Pancreatitis Supporters Network

Moseley

Printed in the Evening Mail 13 October 1997

This letter was one of a series that Elizabeth and myself wrote to the Evening Mail, Points of View and Right to Reply. We only managed to get this one printed. Mrs Simpson managed to get a response from Points of View. You could help by writing to these programmes and helping to raise awareness of the condition. If you get any response will you please give a photocopy to ourselves?



## Benefits Worry!?

New threats to our hard won benefits appear to be making the headlines.

In one article spotted by Liz it comments on RADAR believing that the Government is considering taxing or means testing Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.

A Royal National Institute for the Blind spokesman added that the proposals to shift control of the DLA benefit to Local Government which would 'take the power away from individual people over how to spend their money'.

Pauline Thompson, Director of the Disablement Income Group, said 'It (The Government) has been very keen to consult everyone on other things but it's been very quiet on this issue'

Almost as worrying has been the issue of spot checks on people in their own homes in a Government initiative to restrict the number of claimants of DLA. On this last issue Baroness Hollis of Heigham, the Labour peer and Under Secretary of State for Social Security was unavailable for comment.

Disability support groups claim that the Benefits Agency is using medical information collected on claimants who receive Incapacity Benefit as a reason to stop their disability allowances.

All very worrying and if we hear of anything we will let you know through the Newsletter.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why it is getting harder for people to claim Disability Living Allowance?