

PERSONAL STATEMENT

JOHN DAVIS

In October 1987 I was 47 years old, with a very responsible position with a major company covering most of the UK. I was fairly fit, played golf 3 times a week to a handicap of 7. I enjoyed a busy social life, living life to the full. Wining, dining with friends, and playing competitive sports at a high level. Then I collapsed with severe pancreatitis and woke up 17 days later in intensive care with Type 1 diabetes. A severe culture shock!

From that moment on, my life changed, for the next two years I spent more time in hospital than out. I could not get to grips with daily insulin injections and the constant fluctuations in blood glucose levels due to having "brittle diabetes." Due to the unpredictable swings in blood glucose levels I became a virtual recluse. The strict insulin regime meant I could longer live a spontaneous life, no more going out to dinner with friends, no more socialising and no more golf! My life became a misery. Consequently I was forcibly retired at the age of 50.

Life was very difficult and unstable, the only exercise available was walking but this eventually was denied me because I completely lost my hypo awareness and would go hypo very quickly. I frequently left home with a blood glucose of around 10 mmol, and 45 minutes later collapse in the street with a BG of less than 3 mmol. It is hard to describe how complicated life was at this stage, I became reluctant to go anywhere, which meant that she was very anxious about leaving me on my own and many times returned home to find me collapsed on the floor, requiring an ambulance and a trip to A & E. This impacted upon my wife's freedom, forever rushing about not wanting to be away too long. Never knowing what she would find when returning. She became very stressed and quite unwell, virtually a prisoner in her own home.

The hospital kept telling me that I was well controlled. I discovered that far from being "well controlled," I was in fact only achieving my target BG around 60% of the time. The rest of the time was spent fluctuating between high BG and low BG. (See enclosed charts).

By 1990 I began to develop complications, firstly neuropathy, then retinopathy and tumours on my spine, all - according to the doctors - diabetes related. Over the next few years things went from bad to worse, my liver was affected and my bilirubin was 44, I had become jaundiced and felt dreadful, so much so that I was referred to the Crisis Intervention Clinic at Bournemouth Hospital. Eventually becoming their first patient to be offered an insulin pump.

On 29 June 1998, I began insulin pump therapy. On the very first day, every blood glucose reading was in single figures (see enclosed chart). Initially my wife was extremely concerned, the first night she stayed awake all night constantly checking me to see if I was going Hypo. Once she realised that the pump was reliable, she stopped worrying and had total faith in the pump. There were hiccups of course; several times I forgot to take the meal bolus. But this was easily rectified and I was soon back to normal.

Since starting the pump I have regained my hypo awareness, and even when going hypo, my BG drops very slowly enabling me to treat myself rather than rely on others. My bilirubin has dropped to 22, maybe because I am better controlled. I now use 38% less insulin and because I no longer need to feed the insulin, I have lost weight and generally feel more healthy and alive, instead of being sluggish or tired. I am now far more even tempered.

The dramatic difference that the pump has made to our lives is incredible, friendships have been renewed, social life renewed and at last, we can enjoy our grandchildren. I no longer have to follow a strict meal timetable, I can eat whenever I wish or even not at all, very useful when ill and not wanting to eat. We have started having holidays again, Crete, Portugal it doesn't matter where, the pump enables me to live a "normal" life. The pump has given us both a much better quality of life.

The decision to go on the pump was a turning point in my life, the insecurity has gone. I feel so much more positive and in control of the condition. The day to day stress of diabetes has gone.

My diabetes no longer controls me. I control it! It's like being normal again, and I can remember what that was like.