

Case study

David Ward

Now in his early fifties, David Ward has been living with dystonia since he was 40 but, thanks to a mix of supportive family and his own resolve and tenacity, he has remained on top of his career and in control of his life.

David has cervical dystonia, something he became aware of round 1998, noticing small problems with his hands and slight movement of the head, combined with an unease that not all was right.



● David Ward

A visit to his GP quickly resulted in David being referred to a neurologist at a local hospital. Subsequent visits for additional consultations, and to facilitate an MRI scan, confirmed he had dystonia.

Comments David, "It took just two months to be correctly diagnosed. I have my employer's healthcare scheme to thank for the speed and accuracy of the diagnosis. It enabled me to see the neurologist as a private patient." But did correct diagnosis result in a fairytale ending? Not quite. "Some medication was prescribed. However, side effects of being drained, lifeless, and not fit for anything led to me stopping medication after a couple of weeks.

"After further diagnosis and with a few adjustments such as using a fat pen, reducing amount of writing, increasing work on my computer, and a better pillow for sleeping, my symptoms reduced."

But it was only temporary respite. As David observed, "symptoms of head turning returned in 2005. Further consultations led to botulinum toxin injections after a couple of months, and I've had injections at a three-monthly frequency ever since. Touch-wood, the injections appear to reduce the symptoms. To add to my stress, the injections under my private health care plan were removed and I had a massive fight on my hands to get them on the NHS. It took a good twelve months of writing to my MP, local health care people and consultant neurologist, plus enlisting the help of the Dystonia Society, before the NHS finally relented."