

MSSA INLAND PIECE for SAMA Insider

By Brian Eades.

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Multiple Sclerosis – a Patient's Story

The clinical manifestations are varied and are determined by the location and extent of the demyelinated foci (plaques). Because plaques manifest anywhere in the CNS, symptoms vary from patient to patient, and from one relapse to the next in the same patient.

Brian Eades was diagnosed with MS in 2000, at the age of 42. He endured an extended period of struggling, and not being able to pin point any specific diagnosis. He led a very active business life as a Marketing Senior GM in a big multi-national, managed a fair size staff, and huge budget. Frequent overseas and domestic business trips affected his fatigue and stress levels.

An active sportsman, his action cricket, squash and golf deteriorated due to declining hand/eye co-ordination. Fatigue in sports also became a big drag. Concentration, and general strength and fitness took its toll. His foot was dragging and his gait started suffering. Eventually, his hand started slipping off his computer keyboard uncontrollably. At this point, Brian went for professional help.

After a battery of MRI's, and a lumbar puncture, a neurologist diagnosed MS. He was baffled as back then MS was relatively unknown. There was no Google (thank goodness!) and available books were very negative. To start with the attacks came twice or three times a year. This then reduced to one every year or two. After about seven years, with international travel and stress being at a high, the attacks started becoming more frequent. His Neurologist suggested he give up the stressful life. Being a career man the shock to his system was enormous. Fortunately, after 28 years of service, the company gave him a fair early retirement package.

Brian says he was lucky he was so sick as the next three years allowed him to slowly slip into retired life. These days his trips are to the shops and not overseas. His sports are bio kinetics, and he walks at the back of the pack at "run walk for life", and he is training for his third attempt at the 702 Walk the Talk, a far cry from the active sports life he once enjoyed, but hugely rewarding nonetheless.

Intellectually, the latest form of building concentration and memory has been by downloading mind games on his phone. He has recently been introduced to Facebook and generally spends time deleting e-mails. To reinforce confidence and manage depression he regularly sees a psychologist.

Brian also gets his grandsons to do odd jobs with him, and spends rewarding time being the wise old owl answering questions. Hobbies are shopping and cooking, if he can remember the recipe. Work comprises helping as a volunteer at the MS Society (anyone wanting to help at the society will be most welcome. It is hard to find volunteers, and they welcome any assistance).

Brian says life is not what it was, but it's still good and rewarding. Life with MS can be a joy, no matter how small the accomplishments; he says a positive attitude, and strong family support, makes all the difference.