

RAF HAVE THEIR FINGER ON THE PULSE

There are 1.2 million Atrial Fibrillation (AF) patients in the UK, and at least 200,000 new patients are diagnosed annually. Sergeant Gerard 'Sully' O'Sullivan, aged 47 from Cheltenham, is a Logistics (Supplier) deployed with 901 Expeditionary Air Wing in the Middle East and he commented:

"I had suffered from the condition for 6 years until I had a heart Ablation operation at Papworth Hospital in Nov 09. So I just wanted to raise awareness of AF to thank the Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA) and the RAF Medical Services".

Sully went on to explain that AF consumes 1% of the total NHS annual budget, and there is a 1 in 4 life time chance of developing this condition. AF can cause symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, chest discomfort, light headedness, fainting or fatigue. It can suddenly appear with no warning, as Sully explained:

"I've always been fairly fit and the RAF's policy towards fitness ensures that all personnel are kept at a good level of fitness to be able to do their jobs. However, this condition just appeared, literally while I was refereeing a football match".

He went on to say that the RAF Doctor, at his home base of RAF Halton, assessed him as having AF and supported him through a strategy to reduce the risk of strokes and minimise the symptoms.

In an effort to support the AFA 'Know your Pulse' campaign Sully and his fellow detachment personnel raised £450 to help the AFA promote public and medical awareness. The AFA are seeking Department of Health endorsement which will ensure a manual pulse check is part of a routine medical appointment. Sully went on to say:

"On return from my current deployment I hope to help in the formation of a RAF Atrial Fibrillation Association to further raise the awareness for Service personnel and my deployment here overseas shows that it is not a career stopper".

PR LIPSCOMB
Sqn Ldr
83 EAG SO2 Strat Comms