

My name is Damon. I'm 39. For the past 4 years I've lived in Amsterdam where I'm an in-house lawyer at the European head office of a Japanese multinational.

About 18 months ago, I woke up one morning and went to the bathroom. No different to most people. Suddenly, I felt my heart beating extremely fast, I became dizzy and the next thing I knew I woke up on the bathroom floor. I had collapsed and was extremely confused by how this had happened, and very thankful that I had not hit my head on the side of the bath. I went to my company doctor later that day and he told me that I'd got out of bed too quickly which had caused the fainting, and told not to worry about it too much. So I tried not to. Although I couldn't shake off the concern that something was not quite right, and frustrated I could not identify what it was.

Then, almost a year ago, a similar thing happened again. I had been out for a meal with my girlfriend the evening before and had 1 or 2 glasses of wine. Suddenly, almost in a panic I woke up around 7am with my heart racing. I went to the bathroom, although I was feeling extremely weak, light-headed and unstable. I couldn't stand up properly at the toilet so I decided to go into my lounge to sit on the sofa. However I didn't quite make it. I woke up lying on the wooden floor in my lounge in a pool of blood. I looked over and saw blood down the wall. After a few moments I got up and went into the bathroom and looked in the mirror and realized what had happened, I had collapsed into the wall. My girlfriend took me immediately to the Amsterdam Medical Centre. Within the first 2 minutes of being seen by a doctor, they had determined from my very fast and irregular heart beat that I was suffering from Atrial Fibrillation.

Since that time, I have been on medication which fortunately is working reasonably well. In fact, with the medication I lead a life no different to before. I play tennis once a week, I go to the gym, and I cycle. I have made some changes though. I no longer drink caffeine (only decaf) and whereas before I may have had 2 or 3 glasses of wine when I ate out, I now only have 1, or 2 maximum. I have realized that alcohol and caffeine contribute to bringing on the AF.

I can also look back now with hindsight and see that I had without knowing been suffering from AF for some time as I can remember episodes prior to the first time I collapsed where I sometimes had no energy to do anything because my heart was beating so fast. Or, where I felt miserable because my heart was beating in an irregular rhythm.

However, there is a positive side to all this. I am lucky to have discovered I suffer from AF before something more serious could have happened, and I am grateful that there is medication which works reasonably well to more or less control the AF. My Cardiologist has also informed me that I am a good candidate for the Ablation procedure, which I am currently considering. This experience has also introduced me to the AFA and to take part in fund-raising activities which I had not been involved in before. There's nothing as good as raising money for a good cause! So, there is a silver lining to this!

I will be at the meeting in London on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, and I look forward to meeting other AFA members there.