



"count my blessings, and enjoy life"

I'm James, aged sixty, with over twenty-five years' experience of parish ministry as a vicar, I had visited many hospitals and different types of ward. I had insight into many medical conditions but no personal experience of serious illness. Being admitted to A&E as an emergency myself, all was familiar yet totally different. The CT scan was unclear. As I was taken to be prepared for theatre I had a cardiac arrest - resuscitated after about six minutes. The operation was highly uncertain and nerve-racking for my wife.



A section of gut had become trapped in a caecal hernia of which I had been blissfully unaware. My small bowel had flipped round (volvulus) and become starved of oxygen (ischaemia), causing "abdominal catastrophe". The surgeon removed a chunk of colon and all but 67cm of small bowel, which he managed to connect to the colon.

That was three days before Christmas 2012. Since then I have been on parenteral nutrition - currently four glucose and two lipid a week, 2500ml over fourteen hours, still subject to weight monitoring. Although the trauma triggered long-term side-effects, I am lucky in having no underlying illness and not needing further surgery. PINNT has been a fantastic source of information and encouragement, an eye-opener into how people cope with the most daunting challenges.

I returned to parish work after four months, though dropping some wider community commitments. Life in an East London vicarage is unpredictable, no two days the same, so it is difficult to establish a routine. During the week I tend to connect up late and disconnect around lunchtime (that way I also sleep better). Occasionally I forget to put up the feed early on a Saturday and end up wearing my backpack under my Sunday vestments, looking like the hunchback of Notre-Dame.

Foodwise I go with what works - contrary to all the wisdom, a few lentils, green beans ... Fresh papaya brilliant! Age is not on my side, pill-popping is a chore, but I'm well, count my blessings, and enjoy life, with a wonderful family and support, not to mention travel fridge for UK holidays and PINNT guidelines for venturing abroad.

I wish that there could be more whole-person care. Communications between hospital, GP, pharmacy, and homecare company can be dire. As well as organisational, it's also a question of understanding beyond discrete specialisms and responsibilities. And complementary approaches should be welcomed as *complementary* rather than distrusted as a wacky alternative.

