

OS04 **PMR & GCA** I spent 5 days extremely cold

A week after being shocked to hear of an unprovoked assault on my son and his friends I spent 5 days extremely cold, wearing as many clothes as possible, closing all the windows and turning up the heating. My blood running cold? I am convinced that, for me, this was one of the triggers for PMR & GCA.

For the next 2 months I had spells of feeling tired and out of sorts but put it down to doing too much. In the middle of May I was tidying up after breakfast and said to my husband, "I'll have to go and lie down, I don't feel very well". I thought I had flu with extremely sore bones, severe stiffness, a tube of pain through my head, feeling extremely cold in temperatures of 90° and a slight fever. I was on holiday in France and after 3 weeks I went to the Doctor who ordered a blood test and I saw a consultant in a fortnight who diagnosed PMR & GCA right away. As usual the effect of steroid treatment was miraculous as far as the stiffness and inner thermostat were concerned.

What I found most difficult was coming to terms with sudden loss of energy and unreasonable fatigue. I could walk for a few yards at a reasonable speed and then – nothing! I had to park the car on the same side of the road as the shop I wanted to visit because I couldn't get across the road in time for the traffic. Living was like ploughing through a mental and physical fog wearing heavy boots, and this went on for years.

At the end of September 2003 I came off prednisolone, thought I was cured, and didn't pay attention to 5 symptoms that appeared over the next 9 months. In July 2004 I went to the doctor thinking I had a chill in the bladder, another blood test which was as bad as the initial one in 2001. The unreasonable fatigue has been the worst symptom for me but since mid-December 2007 my stamina has returned. I am now down to 1mg prednisolone per day and hope the end is in sight. I can function for a whole day for the first time in nearly 7 years. There is light at the end of long tunnels.