

## OS18 **PMR & GCA** What a difference the prednisolone made

Since 1995 I have been coping with osteoarthritis and fibromyalgia but in May 2009 strange things were happening to my body. I couldn't get warm despite being wrapped in jumpers and blankets. Then my head hurt when I touched it; just combing my hair was so painful. My appetite disappeared, my jaw became tired and I couldn't chew (totally unheard of for me!) and as for moving - I was stiffening up and could hardly get dressed. My GP was fantastic, took bloods and sent me straight to hospital because the ESR level was sky high. After what seemed like every available test was carried out, they still could not find anything, and my temperature was spiking constantly.

Eventually the rheumatologist said that I had PMR and almost certainly GCA, but a biopsy was needed to confirm it. All the time the doctors kept asking about eye disturbances, but my sight was fine. I was started on 60mg of steroids a day – within 12 hours I was up and running. I felt 20 years younger. Often after only 2 or 3 hours sleep a night, I was busy making jam, cleaning and cooking for hours. What a difference the prednisolone made. Very gradually the dose was reduced and the side effects started to show – chubby cheeks, chubby everywhere, a steroid 'buffalo hump' and cataracts, but these were a small price to pay to save my sight.

Some time ago we moved from Cambridgeshire to Scotland and I have discovered this wonderful support group for PMR-GCA. Here I can swap stories with new friends and find out more about the relatively little known condition and the latest treatments. Unfortunately my GCA has relapsed and I'm back on the steroid treatment, but I know all will be resolved and my cheekbones will eventually return!