

**Submission
No 220**

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND ACCESS TO
HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN RURAL,
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Rural health case - Heart Disease

My family and I moved from Melbourne to Murwillumbah in September 2016, where we rented a house. We purchased a property in Tyalgum in February 2017.

On the 28th of December 2017 I went to Murwillumbah Hospital suffering from chest pain. A heart attack was suspected and I was sent to John Flynn Hospital in Coolangatta to have an angiogram and a stent was inserted to fix a 100% blockage and another 70% blockage was identified.

While the stent resolved my original heart problem, I experienced further, strengthening chest pain and other symptoms over the following months.

I cooperated fully with my cardiologist, GP and cardiac rehab over the following 14 months. I took the medications prescribed, attended rehab and underwent a wide variety of tests. I was encouraged to return to hospital whenever I had chest pain, but I was virtually in continual chest pain and only returned every few months, normally when the pain was elevated. During these 14 months I was not completely free of chest pain.

I continually stated that I would cooperate with medical professionals in order to help resolve my problems, but over this time they were not able to help me recover, in fact I felt myself getting constantly worse and was finally told by my GP that it was probably anxiety and was sent to a psychologist. I was also enrolled in a pain management clinic (in other words, learn how to live with my pain)

Since my GP had suggested psychological problems, the next time I went to hospital with increasing chest pain I was offered Valium and other anxiety drugs and sent home.

I had to travel over the border to Queensland's Gold Coast University hospital to get help because I knew that it was a physical problem.

A second stent was inserted on the 27th of February 2019 at the Gold Coast University Hospital and they suggested that there were more blockages but they weren't prepared to insert further stents due to higher risks of mortality.

After my second stent I determined personally that the advice that I had been following from the medical professionals that I was consulting was making my situation worse. I resolved to start investigating other options and try to find a way to stop my pain in any way that I can.

I started researching for myself and made major lifestyle changes removing anything bad and investigating and implementing anything that could help in my case. I started finding natural remedies that helped much more significantly than did any medication that I was prescribed.

On the 11th of July 2019 I returned to hospital after physically exerting myself and experiencing serious chest pain. I had been starting to feel a bit better and overdid it. It was determined that I had another heart attack.

I made a very naïve mistake in thinking that the doctors would want to know what natural remedies that I had been using to reduce my pain, so I shared with them what had been helping

me. Unfortunately the team of cardiologists at The Tweed Heads Hospital took offense at my suggestion that natural remedies were helping me a lot. The Cardiologists stated that I would be released while still suffering from a heart attack because I was considered a non-compliant patient. The cardiologist who discharged me told my wife and I that he was sending me home to die. He was very aggressive and used bullying tactics and would not listen to me as I tried to explain my current symptoms. He said that he expected that I would not take medications if I was sent for another angiogram and/or stent.

My wife and I were absolutely shocked by the treatment that I received and the lack of patient care that the cardiologist showed.

I was returned to Tweed Heads hospital two weeks later by ambulance and received similar treatment. I was admitted but another doctor promptly discharged me without even asking about my case. It was clear that this doctor had his mind made up before he even met me, he made statements like "you are out of pain and haven't taken any pain killers overnight" which I replied with the fact that I was in pain and had been using pain killers. Every statement that he gave for his reasoning to discharge me was fabricated.

When I was discharged after my second heart attack I was shocked and didn't know where else to go, there aren't many options for medical help in rural areas. On this occasion I decided to travel to the Gold Coast University hospital to get a second opinion. I was in pain, dizzy and had trouble walking. I was in hospital for a week there and it was determined that I had the beginnings of heart failure (with an ejection fraction / heart pumping rate of 35%).

The medical system has failed me considerably in a disease that is very prevalent in society.

I know now that I cannot rely on the Tweed Heads hospital for any help with heart disease.

In the following weeks and months my GP ceased working with me because I was eager to find more ways to help myself naturally and he was unwilling to support me in that. My cardiologist stopped seeing me when I told him that the advice I had been given over the year and a half he had been seeing me had made me consistently worse.

I now have very little faith in the medical system for anything and am spending all of my spare time researching health issues. The only reason that I can justify the medical system is for major trauma resulting from vehicle or other accidents.

If I were living back in Melbourne I may have been able to find other doctors and hospitals that may be able to work with me.

Other countries utilise herbs and other natural remedies to help patients, it is very frustrating that our medical professionals actively dissuade patients from such health supporting options.

It has now been 16 months since I have returned to hospital. I have been reducing my pain consistently using lifestyle changes and natural remedies.

If I had professionals to guide me with the knowledge and experience that I now have, straight after my first heart attack, I would not have wasted 3 years of my life (most of that in pain). I would have a lot of recommendations to give to heart attack patients that are serious about improving their health and recovering as quickly as possible from a life threatening problem.