



Kevin, Carole, Kimberlyn and John F.

Chapter 9

My Personal Thoughts About IPF

by John F.

When I was first asked about my thoughts on idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), I thought it would be an easy task. Then to sit down and put it on paper is another thing.

I was first sent to a pulmonologist about four years ago to ascertain why I was coughing and spitting a lot. Doing cardio exercise five days a week was becoming a challenge. I spent more time doubled over coughing and spitting in my handkerchief, especially in the summer time. I personally thought it was an allergic reaction to some plants or airborne dust particles. The bad time was from April to November. Imagine my surprise when the allergist came back from the scratch tests and said I was not allergic to anything.

The Ohio doctor I was visiting at the time talked about asthma. My grandfather had asthma and lung problems from smoking. Me? I quit smoking over 30 years before, and it was never more than a pack a day.

When I was referred to Dr. F, I didn't know what to expect. I had heard about asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), but nothing about IPF. Casual research did not reveal much. Google gave little hope for recovery and reported a typical life expectancy of about three to five years.

Making regular visits to U-M with various tests and the six-minute walk was fun and challenging. As I told the doctor, "If it can help others down the line, it is all worthwhile."

Meeting with people at the support groups has been helpful in finding that the problems that occur in everyday life are not unique to me. I just hope and pray the new information will aid in the faster diagnosis and treatment of folks with IPF. It is not fun to have shortness of breath and a dizzy feeling.

At this point I seem to be holding my own. Another family illness has caused a change in my exercise pattern. Now it is cardio exercise two times a week and a mall walk three times a week. A current cold has found me a little more short of breath. It seems that the use of a CPAP makes for a better night's sleep and a more productive day.

At this time I am able to walk up a flight of stairs backward with little effort. However, over the past six to eight months my walking speed has slowed down. A current cold has taken its toll with coughing. I am suffering from gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and a skin rash. I don't know if these are a result of the IPF disease. I don't expect to need supplemental oxygen in the near future.

Thank you for your time and interest.

