

My 'brain tumours' were abnormal blood vessels

Jacqueline told she was going to die, but diagnosis was wrong

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A WOMAN has told of her relief after doctors wrongly diagnosed her with terminal brain cancer.

Grandmother-of-five Jacqueline Cox's world was turned upside down when she went to the hospital after complaining of headaches, double vision and dizziness.

Jacqueline, 54, was told she had just a few months to live.

The former book keeper even made arrangements to give up her council house, thinking she would soon be spending her final days in a hospice.

However, two days later, Jacqueline was told she had been misdiagnosed.

She didn't have cancer, but a rare condition called multiple cavernomas – clusters of dilated blood vessels in her brain.

Jacqueline, of Whitchards, Basildon, said: "I had been feeling unwell for about six weeks. It came on really quickly. It was like everything in front of my eyes kept moving and I had terrible headaches.

"The next thing I know I'm told I have terminal brain cancer. I remember just sitting in the hospital bed thinking 'oh well'."

Jacqueline told how she felt helpless and didn't want to see anybody. Then 48 hours later she was given her life back.

She said: "Another doctor came and told me they'd got it wrong. They said the condition is very rare.

"They had to call in specialists from Queens Hospital in Romford to examine me.

"I was so relieved."

Support group assures her she's not the only sufferer

JACQUELINE Cox can take heart from Ian Stuart, 47, from Dorset, who has lived with the same condition since being diagnosed in 1987.

Ian, a member of the Cavernoma Alliance UK, a charity which supports people with the condition, said many of his fellow sufferers were also misdiagnosed.

He said: "Doctors told me I had multiple sclerosis when I first went to see them and over 90 per cent of our members had similar experiences.



■ Jacqueline Cox – feels like she's been given a second chance

Picture: LOUISE MORRIS YTLZR

Once the news had sunk in, Jacqueline realised she had nowhere to live and contacted the council, who quickly found her a flat.

Since her ordeal, Jacqueline said her outlook on life has changed dramatically.

She said: "I had a nice quiet Christmas with my daughter Angela and her kids. I can't take too much noise these days and I don't drink.

"I think I'm more understanding and compassionate of other people now."

The abnormal lesions on Jacqueline's brain bleed, expand and shrink, and it causes Jacqueline much pain.

Nevertheless she is keen to go back to work as a book keeper, but doesn't know if it's possible.

She has to have regular check-ups, and there is a risk her condition could deteriorate.

If the cavernoma on her brainstem moved she could still die.

There is no cure for her condition, but surgery is an option.

Jacqueline added: "I spoke to a surgeon who said there was a risk of becoming paralysed, so I will just live with it.

"I have decided I just have to live every day as it comes. It's pointless to keep worrying, you would never do anything."

ABNORMALITY

- Cavernomas are clusters of abnormal blood vessels found in the brain and spinal cord
- The condition is also known as cavernous angioma, cavernous hemangioma, and cerebral cavernous malformation
- A typical cavernoma looks a bit like a raspberry, made up of bubbles filled with blood
- They are usually no bigger than three cms in diameter.
- These bubbles are leaky and can bleed which can cause seizures, stroke symptoms, haemorrhages and headaches.

"It's really only since the advent of MRI scans doctors have been diagnosing this. So some neurologists don't know about the condition."

Andrew Kelso, a neurologist at Basildon Hospital said: "Cavernomas are diagnosed with MRI scanning, and can look similar to other brain abnormalities, so are often found incidentally.

"Often the opinion of a specialist neuro-radiologist is necessary to accurately identify them."

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