

**NOTICES & REPORTS****Cathy's talk to her discussion group**

*Cathy was invited to give a talk on Meniere's to an informal discussion group (run by her friend Martha) that meets once a month. Here is an edited transcript of her talk:*

David and I met when we were both working as Customs Officers in the Department of Customs and Excise, and studying as evening students at Sydney Uni. We married in 1964 and shortly afterwards he got a job as a Research Psychologist in the National Acoustics Laboratories. We had three children, two boys and a girl. I ran an antique shop with a friend for a couple of years (an unfinancial venture!) then I was at home with my daughter as a baby.

David left the Acoustic Laboratories and went to Macquarie University first as a tutor, then a senior tutor, for seven years. We continued to live in Lane Cove, a comfortable and peaceful life. David went to work as a Student Counsellor with TAFE. I was offered a job as Administrator at Currumbena School. As I needed to pay the bank back after the disastrous antique shop venture, I went to work at that wonderful school, with wonderful people, for 20 years, until I retired.

In about 1992, David started to have attacks of violent vertigo, nausea and vomiting so strong he couldn't do anything but take to his bed for the day. These attacks seemed to come in clusters. We went to several doctors before Meniere's was diagnosed.

In 1992, there wasn't much information available. Now there is the Internet (and the Meniere's Support Group of NSW). Doctors are more aware of Meniere's. In the past, sufferers have been put off public transport because they were thought to be drunk and have been accused in hospitals of being drug addicts or malingerers.

It is one of the aims of the MSGNSW to hold public meetings in metropolitan and regional areas, have information kits mailed to all doctors in NSW and Queensland, and generally to promote recognition of this illness. The Support Group has published an excellent series of leaflets concerning various aspects of the illness and its treatment, all written by medical experts in their field.

Our latest campaign has been to have a description and a leaflet placed in the journal going to Ambulance Officers in NSW about Meniere's. The Meniere's Support Group was incorporated in 1994. My sister in law saw a small notice in the Herald about a public meeting. We went and joined up!

*Here Cathy explained more about Meniere's.*

David continued to have attacks and his hearing deteriorated. Most people have it in one ear, but David was unlucky enough to have it in both ears. He has digital hearing aids in both ears, but the effect on lifestyle is great.

When he was 60, he retired from work. As a counsellor, he said that when people are baring their souls to you, you can't ask them to repeat it! His hearing had become too poor to carry on.

We have a Teletext TV. These titles enable him to watch TV. I quite like them too, especially when watching detective shows with actors who have accents!

David used to be keen on going to classes and even meetings. Now he can't hear the speakers, so that is out, except for MSGNSW meetings, where we are both on the Committee, and I take notes of important things.

Telephone calls are very difficult for him. There is an assistive device that enables him to hear, but it takes time to set up, so he finds that embarrassing.

This week he had to go to our local bank to set up an account. They rang Head Office who then tried to tell him his password over the phone. He said he had to repeat it as he kept getting it wrong. The whole branch could hear his password!

Finally a helpful staff member was able to persuade Head Office to tell her the password so she could write it down for David. Life is full of these difficult moments! I screen calls and answer them if I can. Sometimes they refuse to talk to me as things are in his name!

Social situations are not easy – because of background noise he finds it difficult to hear conversation. Some of the best things for people who are hearing impaired are the Internet, email and computers!

David is the Editor of the Balancer, the journal of the MSGNSW. He is also heavily involved with several email chat groups. People talk on these groups about their difficulties, exchange recipes and tell one another about products and places that comply with their food strictures. They are a wonderful source of support and information.

*If you are a member of a local group, you may decide to give a talk on your experience with Meniere's. Let us know if you require any leaflets to hand out to those present.*



David & Cathy