

## TOM'S TB STORY: PROOF IN THE PUDDING



**When Tom was admitted to hospital he had an excess of fluid around the lungs and inflammation around the heart. He dropped more than two stone in two weeks. Tom was unable to get out of bed and did not want to eat. He also felt cold and shivery, despite sweating constantly.**

"The normal treatment for inflammation around the heart [a condition known as pericarditis] wasn't working. The doctors were beginning to panic and so was I."

"After a brain-storming session, the doctors and specialists decided to put me on treatment for TB even though the test was inconclusive."

Tom recalls that doctors listened to his heart for signs of 'pericardial rub' – the sound of friction between the two inflamed layers of the pericardium. His chest was regularly drained of fluid. At this stage, he was unable to walk the few yards from his wheelchair to the x-ray equipment without help.

"I was put on Pethadin to stop the pain, so I was extremely euphoric when I got it and very scared and grumpy when I didn't. The nurses even brought in their home cooking to get me to eat again – bacon rolls and dumpling.

"The TB treatment began to work even though I had to suffer a few side effects, and I began to put on weight again."

**"The doctors were beginning to panic and so was I!"**



After 5 weeks in hospital, Tom was able to get around quite well. He was discharged to recuperate at home. It was later discovered that Tom had been exposed to TB by a workmate with active TB; though the medical team told him that the type of TB he himself suffered, pericardial TB, was very unusual.

**"A return to work and real life felt absolutely necessary at that time"**

"After 5 months I went back to my job as a painter although this was really too early. I had found the whole experience too much and felt quite isolated and depressed, therefore a return to work and real life felt absolutely necessary at that time."

Tom suffered some scarring around the lungs, but managed to find some positive sides from his experiences.

"I managed to give up smoking and I was a much more mature person, so I was luckier than some."