

# **And just like that... everything is different....**

**Aortic aneurysm...**

When you hear this, it pulls the rug out from under your feet. How can this affect me? What happens next? Will I ever be the same again?



It was autumn 2022 when I was confronted with this diagnosis at the university hospital in Palma. It was preceded by many months of complaints, which both I and the doctors explained as "stress" and "strain". It sounded plausible, a corona infection in February 2020 with extreme long-term consequences, professional upheavals... Many worries and hardships.... It was not an easy time. But I had been noticing changes in my chest for a long time, I was no longer able to work under pressure and had extreme states of exhaustion. The feeling was extreme when my heart was pounding so hard that I could hear it and thought it was going to jump out of my chest at any moment.

**„I guess I'll die  
another day...  
It's not my time  
to go!**

-Madonna-



A marathon of doctor's visits followed, always with the same result: "stress"... I think I walked out of many a doctor's office and got a pitying look behind me that said, "hypochondriac". But I know my body and always listen to myself critically but carefully. Besides, I have other "hobbies" than going to the doctors.

But my condition deteriorated visibly and in mid-November 2022 I literally banged my fist on the table and demanded an examination in the heart department of the university hospital "Son Espases" here in Palma. The diagnosis was made very quickly and pulled the rug out from under me, but also from under my private surroundings. A normal aorta should have a diameter of 3.5 cm, but mine was already 7.5 cm. The doctors immediately made it clear that only surgery would be an option. When I sat at a table with my heart specialist and she explained the operation to me, I thought I was in the wrong film. In short: "We will open your chest, stop your heart, then we will replace parts of the aorta or replace it completely and then we will have to see that we get your heart going again, but don't worry, we do that every day". Yes... but this time with me!

I have to say that the cardiology department at Son Espases rightly has the reputation of being one of the best in Europe. Patients from all over the world come here to be treated. I felt I was in the best of hands from day one.

A few more weeks of preparation followed, with heart catheterisation, X-rays, special blood tests. But it was clear that time was of the essence, because the aorta was threatening to burst any day now, and when that happens you definitely don't stand a chance, even if you just happen to be in an emergency room.Â

Looking back, I have to say that this time is important for you personally, but also for your personal environment, to accept the condition and to get involved in what will follow.

And, as it usually is in crisis situations, you realise who and what is important in your life. Personally, we really realised at this time who real friends are and who we can do without with a clear conscience.

On 24 January 2023 the time had come, at 8 o'clock in the morning I was taken to the operating theatre. Of course I was very scared, but I realised that I only had the choice to put myself and my life in the hands of the specialists now. I simply told myself: "They know what they are doing". The operation lasted almost 8 hours and my entire aorta was replaced. I can't remember the first hours after the operation, I must have tried to remove all the tubes after I woke up. But again, the professionalism of all the staff was evident, not only in their loving care for me, but also for my relatives, because one should not forget how much the people who share this situation with us have to suffer. I have only survived this because I am lucky to have my family and friends around me.

The first days are hard, of course, but every day you notice that things are looking up. You learn a little more humility and patience... But everything will be fine... I live in an environment that lovingly cares for me, catches me and helps me regain my strength. I was given a second life and I no longer take things for granted. I am looking forward to everything that is to come, because I have always said in advance: "My story is not yet finished". Come with me!