

RENAL ART GROUP

(NORTHERN IRELAND)

R.A.G. (Northern Ireland) MEMBERS 2017

Formed in 2016, the Renal Arts Group is a collaboration between academics from Queens University, Belfast, patients (service users), clinicians and artists.

Dr Helen Noble (Nursing Lecturer, QUB)

William Johnston (NI Patient Advocate, Kidney Care UK)

Andrea Spenser (Artist, NI ARTScare)

Dr Joanne Reid (Nursing Lecturer, QUB)

Christopher Johnston (Transplant Recipient)

Jenny Bradley-Lee (Dancer/Artist, University of Florida)

John Brown (Father of transplant recipient)

Kevin Gormley (Assistant Director of Nursing, QUB)

Paul Murphy (Head of Drama, QUB)

Mr Ian Walsh (Medicine, QUB)

Emma McClean (Nursing, Undergraduate student, QUB)

Michael Matthews (Renal Research Nurse)

Matt Birch (IT, QUB)

Libby Wetherup (Renal Counsellor)

Norman Harrison (Chaplain, Royal Victoria Hospital)

**“THE LOSS OF HOPE CAN
DRIVE A MAN INSANE**

**A SERIES OF POEMS WRITTEN BY WILIAM JOHNSTON WHILST ON
DIALYSIS, WAITING FOR HIS “GIFT OF LIFE”**

1997 - 2013

WAITING FOR THE CALL

1) I come through the hall

My heart flutters and I think it will stall

A red light flashes, Its my Call" I yell

A chance to escape my own personal hell

2) Visions of health and opportunity appear

Are these tears of hope, panic or fear

A past life forgotten is close at hand

Where I can hold my head high and proudly stand

3) I lift the phone to my pulsing sore head

Please don't let it be what I must dread

Another disappointment, another closed door

A quality of life not rich but poor

4) Alas, it is as I predicted and even expected

Yet again another fortunate soul is selected

When will I be called or will it be too late

Only God in his wisdom, will determine my fate

AFTER HAEMO

1) Four and half hours I have been on this bed
An eternal battle in my soul and my head
My body and mind feel constantly at war
My back hurts and my legs are so sore

2) Though mentally young with a body too old
My demeanour is black and my spirit is cold
Back home alone to continue my fight
To await my wife, my only bright light

3) The dogs are afraid and run to hide
This is not William nor Jackal but Hyde
He is resentful, bitter and in a bad mood
Black dominates, where is the good?

4) I retire to bed to recover and rest
My heart beats quickly and thumps in my chest
Blood pressure is low, I can hardly stand
Is this salvation or is death close at hand

5) Two hours later and William is back
He feels better and life is on track
Carla appears and gives him a kiss
It is her true love and friendship he will miss

THE HOLE

1) How long have I been in this dark, dark hole
Dancing with the shadows of my black evil soul
I thought I had all my life ahead of me when I left school
But I am without doubt , a pathetic, pitiful fool

2) On the scrapeheap at such a young tender age
Give the monkey a banana trapped in the cage
Keep bouncing back when you get knocked down
Everybody can feel superior to the clown about town

3) How many times does one have to fail
Like a dog forever chasing its own tail
Short and stumpy, perhaps even fat
With morals and integrity of a black smelly rat

4) The hole is getting darker and far too deep
Perhaps it time for that long fateful sleep
Put me out of my agony howled the creature
Keep my eyes closed so I can't see the future

LIFE ON HAEMO

1) So here I am, on haemo again
Regardless of sunshine, snow or rain
There's no escape or restbite
This is my existence and my eternal fight

2) Do you see a person or just a name?
Please remember, we are not all the same
Some are young and some are old
We must be here, so we are told

3) I used to be an athlete and able to run
A life full of potential and endless great fun
But this condition has put my life on hold
My heart is hollow and feels very cold

LIFE ON HAEMO

**4) We Live with the shadow of death every day
It takes hidden strength to survive this way
We have relinquished our authority and control
Beholding and obedience dictate our life role**

**5) There is no liberty or any short cut
Channels of freedom are kept firmly shut
No access to travel, work, rest or play
Our only hope is the transplant day**

**6) So please don't judge us on our three sessions a week
We are mentally strong though physically weak
We have our family and we have our pride
It is only through their love we will survive**

THE FALSE DAWN

1) The Call from high above arrives which sets me on my way

The voice informs me calmly that this could be my day

A kidney has been donated which perhaps may set me free

But please, remember, William, you are only one of three

2) I arrive at the City hospital and go to the 11th floor

Greeted by a nurse comforting all who come before

All three patients appear with a common look of plea

“Please let it be my kidney so at last I can be free”

3) Bloods are taken and sent for that all important test

I send a pray to God and hope for the very best

I have an ECG and sent for a chest X –Ray

So, if by a miracle, it’s my kidney, there will be no delay

THE FALSE DAWN

4) Then I am left to think and all I can do is wait

The time goes so slowly and its getting extremely late
I dream of sparkling rainbows and that elusive pot of gold
But suddenly a nurse appears with a face so stony cold

5) Time stands still, I gulp for air, I can hear my heart beat

My mind begins to melt and quickly overheats
Is it my turn? Or is it God's little game and its just another tease
Let it be my kidney, Oh Please! Oh Please! Oh Please!

6) "It's a positive cross match" the nurse is sorry to have to tell

The door to the promised land slams shut, welcome back to hell
I turn to my wife and my family who are looking quite forlorn
But I say to myself "Don't worry, it's just another false dawn"

THE BIG FIGHT

1) Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the fight for life

Introducing in the Blue Corner, WJ fighting out of fright

Introducing in the Red Corner, End Stage Renal failure

Hoping to bring WJs life to a swift and ultimate closure

2) ESRF throws the first punch with daily fluid restriction

WJ tries to conform but resists with utter conviction

ESRF counters with strict rules to favourite foods

WJ laughs as he knows it can only do him good

3) WJ refuses to buckle and is determined not to be beat

He goes swimming, walks the dogs, gets fit, ERSF begins to feel the heat

ERSF attacks WJs mental strength to grind him into the ground

Those promised compatible donors are no longer to be found

THE BIG FIGHT

4) WJ is wounded and hurt but refuses to lay down

Home haemo brings independence and freedom to make ESRF frown

ESRF fails to realise new technology allows WJ to constantly attack

No matter what ESRF throws , the stubborn WJ keeps on bouncing back

5) “So bring it on” you hear WJ proudly shout

“Do your worst as you will never knock me out”

“I am one patient who will no longer live in fear

As I am determined to keep fighting ESRF for many more a year”

DEFEATED

1) The fire in the belly has been finally distinguished
The golden mane of Aslam was long ago shorn
No longer the sound of the mighty roar of defiance
The Angel of Hope has long ago flown

2) The shield weighs so heavy and the sword is blunt
No longer is there an appetite to continue the fight
Muscle are so tired and the mind is fatigued
The back id bent double, body buckled to the knees

3) No one to hear the cries for help
No place to go to find the answers
Too many regrets to view the past
Too scared to search for the future

4) The present stands still as my life slowly ebbs away
The hour-glass of life is down to the last grain of sand
Hands clasped so tightly pleading for a saviour
A brave battle fought but I now stand here defeated

THE NURSES

1) There are a group of people who really care

Who are willing to gave their love to share

Their dedication and professionalism put me to shame

I am a pain in the butt when I don't play the game

2) But they have a patience and a will to forgive

And make a difference so I can live

I owe them my well-being and my health

If I won the lottery they could have my wealth

3) They put up with my tantrums and my bad moods

They overcome problems and only do good

I wish I could tell them of my immense gratitude

So please forgive me if I am ever rude

THE NURSES

4) Who are these heroes I hear you ask

These people with this unwelcome task

Who are God's living Angels but with no wings

Who give life saving hope without asking for a thing?

These saviours are the Global nursing medical profession

Who treat damaged flowers so they may have a chance to blossom

