



**Alex lives in Ontario with AVSD, Mitral Valve Regurgitation and Chronic Atrial Tachyarrythmias leading to being fully pacemaker dependent.**

I have had a lot of surgeries and procedures, including repair of partial AVSD (1982), first mitral Valve Replacement and cardioversion (1983), a second mitral valve replacement (1993) and a cardioversion followed by third mitral valve replacement in 1997.

Starting around 2000 my arrhythmia's began to act up again and I required cardioversions and medications until they began to change and become more serious. In 2009 I went into ventricular tachycardia which led me to have my first ablation that caused me to go into full heart block and require an external pacemaker then a permanent pacemaker. From 2009-2018 I had several cardioversions due to all types of arrhythmia's. During this period of time I had seven unsuccessful ablations in total but lucky number 8 has held this far. In 2018 I had my second pacemaker put in but a wire moved in to of the device so it had to be re-implanted a few months later in 2019. I am completely pacemaker dependent now.

I have an incredible CHD team!! I don't know what I would do with out them. My doctors and nurses over the years have been wonderful guides and teachers for me along the way. They've also guided me to the proper reading materials if I need them, as I am someone who likes to ask questions. Recently I've had to switch over doctors due to them retiring but the doctors who have taken over for them had already been working side by side with them so they were already a part of my team!! I call them my hospital family, I've been in so much over the past 10 years that I really got to know my own team plus so many of the other nurses and doctors that work there. They were all very supportive because if that last ablation didn't work they weren't sure what they were going to do...



Some further resources or support I would like to see include therapy that's covered, along with more accessible peer support for all ages!! Fun activities like the camp but which is more accessible for all ages and income. Exercise programs that aren't set up for seniors...I know that sounds strange but when I went to rehab I was on a bike for two minutes with no tension on the lowest speed and that was at the end of my program - how is that supposed to build my cardio at my age? I still couldn't walk more than a block when I finished that program I felt like I gained nothing from it!! We need programs set up for the individual's progress with heart in mind. More family support too, my mom wants to help and share her story and she is always told no.

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Right now I'm just looking forward to having more energy and getting out more. It's been a long journey back for me but slowly each day I get a bit stronger. I just keep taking one day at a time and step by step I walk a little further. I feel so grateful that I'm finally able to share just a piece of my story.