HWM09 Interview 12-Jan-2021 transcript

RB: Ok those are recording now

HWM09 Ok

RB: So the first questionnaire is called the University of Toronto Atrial Fibrillation Severity Scale and this is one that we use to assess how severe people's symptoms are from the AF that they're having.

HWM09: Ok

RB So the first question is your gender

HWM09: Er, female

RB: And the second one is your.. we don't need your date of birth but the year of your birth if you wouldn't mind

HWM09: 1957

RB: And are you in AF currently.

HWM09: It.. it's weird, it's up and down

RB: Ok, so tell me what you, what your symptoms are

HWM09: Um well I have, it's got worse, of course, um.. but I don't know is it because.. in the day you're doing things and you don't really notice so much e.. the breathlessness and the when you do have a real big whack when you think you're going to have a heart attack because you go all dizzy and you come to, but it's worse at night. Is that because I'm relaxed? I don't know.

RB: Sure, I don't know either. Is it because you're more aware of it and you're not thinking about other things?

HWM09: That's right and I think because at night.. because whenever it happens to me when I can feel it, I panic a bit. Because your heart does this weird thing and your head, it feels like it's in your head, and a.. and it panics you. And I get that more at night because probably because I'm not thinking so much of it in the day

RB: Yeah

HWM09: You're distracted in the day and it's not playing on your mind. Yeah.

RB: Ok. And what is it that makes you feel panicky about it?

HWM09 I get panicky because I think I'm going to have a heart attack.. um, and I don't like the feeling, I really don't like the feeling. It makes you feel quite vulnerable, to be honest.

RB: Ok, yeah, yeah, I understand. So the next question is "How do you feel about your life at the present time?" if one was the worst possible life and ten was the best possible life - and bearing in mind we're going through quite a strange period globally at the moment – where would you put your life on that scale from 1-10?

HWM09: A four.

RB: Four, ok. What's making it a four? What would it need to push it up to a five?

HWM09: I can't do the things that I used to be able to do. I can't walk the dogs um which I used to love and the kinda past two years I haven't been able to walk the dogs properly. I can't.. I panic if I've got to walk.. if I go.. if I.. before the pandemic if the kids say to me or my family say let's go and have a day out I panic on how much walking there's gonna be. Um, even going to the supermarket, I know which.. there's only two I'll go to 'cause I know the aisles – does that make sense?

RB: Absolutely

HWM09: Um, but I do panic a lot if I've got to go somewhere different and I don't know what the walking distance will be

RB: Yeah. And is that because of symptoms?

HWM09: Yeah and it's because I feel as if.. I don't know, I just feel anxious. It's caused a lot of anxiety, um having this because as I say I'm always a step ahead thinking well I can't do that because I'm going to be out of breath, I'm going to go lightheaded, I'm going to sweat like a pig, and it's stopping me doing things.

RB: Sure. So is it more the anxiety about what could happen rather than the actual symptoms that's holding you back, do you feel?

HWM09: Yeah. It's a bit of both but more so of what could happen.

RB: Yeah. Do you feel better if you've got other people around you or do you prefer to be on your own?

HWM09: Yes, yeah no I always feel better when there's other people around me because then you're not thinking so much and if I'm out and anything happens to me then I know I'd have someone with me

RB: Yeah. Has anything ever happened to you while you've been out?

HWM09: Once, about a year ago in Tesco's, this is why I have people with me now. Luckily I had the trolley, I thought, with one of the attacks I had I thought I was going to pass out and I sort of fell down on the trolley a bit. Um, but then it goe.. passes and I could get going. They were very kind, because I hate that sort of thing anyway, and they wanted to call an ambulance and all that sort of thing – no, I'm alright. 'Cause once the heart sort of gets back into play it stops.

RB: Yeah, yeah. Ok. Then the next question is "On average.. How often on average does your irregular heart rhythm occur?"

HWM09: Quite a lot

RB: Do you have it everyday?

HWM09: Oh god yeah. Oh yes oh yeah it does happen everyday.

RB: But it's not continuous, it comes and goes but..

HWM09: It comes and goes, yes

RB: .. but more than once or twice a day?

HWM09: Where I was doing the treadmill to try and lose weight, I can't do it anymore. I was doing really well – a whole year I got up really well and then all of a sudden things got worse and I ca.. I go too lightheaded and my heart just goes as if it's in my head, do you know what I mean?

RB: Yeah, yeah. Is that a treadmill in your.. you've got a treadmill in your house have you?

HWM09: Yeah. We got one because when I went on this health kick about a year ago I thought I'd invest in one and it was doing brilliantly, you know the whole family have got into this health kick with me…

RB: Oh that's so good!

HWM09: And – yeah it is – but now I can't go on it because I get too.. Sweat – I've never sweated like that in my life, you know? And it's outside, so I'm out in the cold, and I.. it's just.. and it's like cold sweat, it's horrible, and then my heart goes blummin' bonkers and I'm frightened I'm going to fall off it, so I haven't been back on it.

RB: Ok. Are you hoping, once you've had the ablation are you hoping that'll change?

HWM09: Oh god yeah, I'm hop.. I just want to get back.. I'm.. You see because to some of the medication I am, the weight loss is slower than the rest of my family. Which is fine, I'm still losing, um, but it was helping more with the treadmill..

RB: Yeah of course

HWM09: .. and if I went out walking my dogs. I know it would come off quicker – does that make sense?

RB: Absolutely, of course. Yes it makes perfect sense doesn't it that it's a combination of diet and exercise

HWM09: That's right. And I used to feel so good after I'd gone for these long walks on my treadmill. You know, I felt so good on it and I'd come out of it and I, I'd be sort of buzzing round the house – it would be lovely. And now I've gone back down to that - and COVID doesn't help – I've gone back down to that sort of just sitting there on an afternoon watching television and that's really, to be frank, pissing me off! [Both laugh]

RB: That's alright really – let rip! This is your moment, say what you want!

HWM09: Thank you

RB: I was laughing – one of the people I interviewed for this study happens to be a nurse and she kept saying things similar to that and apologising. But the thing is that when you write up a study like

this you want a good title, so I was saying oh that's ok, I'll use that for my title [both laugh]. So the next question is how long on average do the episodes of AF last?

HWM09: It all depends, sometimes they last.. in your head it seems like probably about 5, 10 minutes but it isn't, it's probably a couple of minutes that it happens. But because you're waiting for it to stop it probably seems longer

RB: And your most recent episode – how severe was it, if 1 was not at all severe and 10 was extremely severe?

HWM09: Not at all severe

RB: So it was just a mild one?

HWM09: Well it's in the middle of that one actually, 'cause I've had severe ones..

RB: Yeah

HWM09: .. and I've had mild ones. I'd go for the middle of the road of that one

RB: So would you give it a 5?

HWM09: Yeah.

RB: And what's the difference between a severe one and a mild one?

HWM09: A severe one causes me dreadful anxiety because I think I'm going to have a heart attack. Um, when it's a mild one you know what is it and you try to out.. you try to ride over it.

RB: Sure. Ok

HWM09: But when they're severe, they're very scary.

RB: Um, and the very first time you had AF, how severe was that from 1 to 10?

HWM09: Oh god, we're talking years… er, I remember coming out of the garden, out of the back fence and I thought I was going to have a heart attack, and my husband had to help me, and this is when he said "You're going to the doctor's". [pause]

RB: That sounds sensible

HWM09: And that's the very first time I realised there was something wrong

RB: Sure. So can you tell me a bit about how it started – had anything led up to that?

HWM09: All I can think.. to be honest with you darling I've had a very stressful life in the last 12 years and it probably started about then. I have a alcoholic daughter who has mental health issues. Lucki.. touch wood she's been dry for 6 months and we're getting there. I've got used to it being a part of my life but at the beginning it was hard, and I had to have the two wee ones come and live with me. So I don't know if it was the stress of that. But I've, from a very young age darling I've had a very stressful life. So I think that causing 11 years ago, I think that might have added to it, do you know what I mean?

RB: Yeah, absolutely. So it was 11 years ago that your AF started?

HWM09: Really sort of st.. I.. I'd ignored it, I thought it was - I tell you what I thought it was, palpitations. I thought it was.. because I was stressed out, I was feeling angry, I was preparing for the children to come and live with me and I just used to think it was palpitations. And when I went to the doctor the first time he said yeah that's what it is, it's you're stressed out [name]. It didn't go away. Even when life settled, it didn't go away.

RB: It stuck with you, yeah.

[Pause]

HWM09: Yeah

RB: Yeah. Ok. So the next part of the questionnaire's about treatments that you've had for AF. Have you ever had a cardioversion?

HWM09: What's that?

RB: It's where you have an electric shock

HWM09 Yeah, I had that, it's got to be about a year and a half ago now

RB: Right. Just once you've had that?

HWM09: Mmm

RB: How did your AF actually get diagnosed in the end?

HWM09: I kept going to the doctors, and one of the lady doctors said I'm just gonna give you and ECG she said, just to be on the safe side. And that's when it was diagnosed.

RB: That was when they found it

HWM09: And then they put me on.. I went to see the heart specialist and he put me on a load of tablets and, um, betablockers. And it settled it for a while. But as the years have gone on, these past two years it's got worse

RB: Sure. Out of interest, the lady doctor who put the ECG on you, prior to that had you mostly seen male doctors?

HWM09: Yeah. Nobody was taking me seriously and I started, to be honest with you, thought it was in my own head. Because they started, they know about my life..

RB: Yeah. And so nobody bothered to examine you physically

HWM09: Yeah. And they kept saying [name] it's age, it's stress, it's menopause. I was getting all this. And then I saw this lady doctor and she said no I'm just gonna do.. She was the one that diagnosed as a diabetic as well at the same time. It was weird because nobody had listened to me on *those* symptoms. And then that day she did a prick, a blood prick on me and an ECG. And in one day I had

all this oh you're diabetic type 2, you've got to go and see a heart specialist, and you know, and that was all through my lady doctor, yeah.

RB: I hope the others felt embarrassed! That they..

HWM09: I don't know if anything was said and the person I am I don't complain

RB: No. I do it. I don't complain on my behalf but I complain on other people's behalf!

HWM09: Yeah. If it had been one of my kids I'd have been in there!

RB: Isn't it funny how we're always ready to advocate for other people but when it's you yourself you're like oh no it's probably just me, it's probably nothing..

HWM09: Yeah, yeah. It's like at the moment I'm going through this really bad taste in my mouth and it's about 6, 7 months, and they don't.. this guy who – 'cause you can't choose who you hear.. can speak to at the moment – and do you know it's really irritating me. If he lived with this – where I can't taste anything, it's all vile, and my food and everything, and he just gives me lotions and potions and it's still there.

RB: Oh that's strange isn't it. But obviously needs investigating, one would have thought.

HWM09: Yeah. I would have thought so but there you go..

RB: Ok. Um so have you ever had to go into the Emergency Department with your AF?

HWM09: No

RB: No. Good. And have you ever – apart from obviously when you came in for your ablation but then didn't have your ablation – have you ever been hospitalised because of your AF?

HWM09: No

RB: No. And in the last year how many times have you seen a cardiologist?

HWM09: This last year? Not many, it's been phone calls

RB: Sure. How many phone calls have you had?

HWM09: One. That actually said I should have this treatment. Then afterwards I hear from them because they're telling me about the treatment.

RB: Yes

HWM09: But one, yeah. It was last April I think, they rang to see how I was. And that's when she decided she would get back to the chappy and they would do this procedure.

RB: Yeah. Yeah. Ok. What did you talk about in that consultation?

HWM09: We talked about weight, we talked about my life, and basically all the questions you've asked me. She was a lovely lady actually um. Yes that sort of thing, about how it affected me, and..

RB: Ok. So it sounds like that was one of the specialist nurses who called you

HWM09: Yes, yes

RB: They're great aren't they? They really go into things properly.

HWM09: They're absolutely beautiful. They're absolutely beautiful women up at that [Hospital] I tell you

RB: So going on now to symptoms and how often they bother you

HWM09: How often..?

RB: How often they bother you

HWM09: Right

RB: Do you ha.. er, you said you feel palpitations

HWM09: Um, the palpitations are the same now – that's what I used to call them. Um, they're just like dizziness and the sweating and I feel as if my heart's gonna come out of my chest

RB: Uh-huh, and the question is "How often have you been bothered by this is the past four weeks?" – not all, very little, a little, a fair amount, a lot or a great deal

HWM09: A fair amount

RB: A fair amount. What about shortness of breath at rest, do you ever get that?

HWM09: Um, not at rest.

RB: But doing..

HWM09: I get a lot of shortness of breath when I'm doing something. Even if that's the cooking

RB: Sure, so as soon as you start moving around you start feeling it

HWM09: I don't get it when I'm resting

RB: That's good. And do you feel.. Obv.. Do you feel, as well as breathless do you feel tired when you're exercising?

HWM09: Yeah. All the time.

RB: All the time. And do you feel tired when you're resting?

HWM09: Yes. And I feel tired as soon as I wake up. You wouldn't have thought I'd had a.. you'd have thought I'd been on a night out every night.

RB: Oh bless you. Yeah. If only, eh? [both laugh] And the lightheadedness, how much does that bother you?

HWM09: A lot

RB: A lot. And do you ever get any chest pain or pressure in your chest?

HWM09: I get heaviness, if that makes sense

RB: Yeah, absolutely, and how often does that bother you?

HWM09: Um, not as much as the breathlessness, I'd probably.. it bother.. I'd say in a week, I'd probably get that about two, two to three times a week.

RB: Sure, so would you say a little?

HWM09: Yeah

RB: Ok. The questionnaire's much shorter, there's just five questions about your activities that you might do every day, um and whether your AF's both.. er impacting on those at all. The first one's about mobility and there are five options and it says I have no problems in walking about, I have slight problems in walking about, I have moderate problems, severe problems, or I am unable to walk about.

HWM09: I'd go between moderate and severe, um, just for the fact I'm no.. I can walk about, but as I said to you I'd rather sit. Because to walk around is the biggest effort in my life. But I make myself do it.

RB: Sure. And then going any further is associated with anxiety and concern about whether you're gonna be unwell.

HWM09: Yes.

RB: What about washing and dressing yourself, do you have any problems?

HWM09: No, not at all

RB: No problems. And what about activities around the house, housework, family activities, work?

HWM09: I can't do the housework as much because just polishing absol.. I have to sit down. My daughter, bless her, um because she can't work because of this COVID she's been taking over this side of it but that makes me feel inadequate.

RB: Sure, because you feel like you should be able to look after your own home?

HWM09 Yeah. I only have to get up and polish the where the television stand is and then I have to sit down. Then I get up and polish the windowsill, get to sit down. That.. And I sweat to the point where it's horrible. And I'm soaking wet so I just sit in between. But there's days I can't do it and my lovely daughter she'll do it for me

RB: Bless her. Do you have any pain or discomfort?

HWM09: No, not with my heart, no. Arthritis and that sort of thing. But I don't have pain and discomfort with it, no

RB: Not with your heart. Does your arthritis slow you don't at all?

HWM09: Yes. Yeah

RB: Um and the next question's about anxiety and depression – you mentioned you get quite anxious..

HWM09: Yes

RB: Do you ever get depressed?

HWM09: I do but I push myself out of it. Because I've got too much going on with my family that I have to be there for, do you know what I mean? I when I feel like I'm going to have one of those days – 'cause I had a mental breakdown years ago, and this lady she was brilliant and she taught me to pull myself around and so far, touch wood, it's working

RB: Oh that's good! And that was like a psychological technique was it?

HWM09: Yeah. I make myself do things. I make myself.. because I know that without me I don't know how my family could cope, do you understand what I mean

RB: Yep, yep. I do. Because you're obviously doing a huge amount, I mean…

HWM09: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, ok. And then the last question is on a scale from nought to a hundred, taking all of your health into consideration so your AF, your arthritis, your diabetes, if nought is the worst health you can imagine and a hundred is the best health you can imagine, where would you put your health today?

HWM09: [Pause] I would go 40

RB: 40. Ok, so same as for quality of life. And what would be your priority for your health?

HWM09: My priority is my weight and smoking. I've got to conquer weight before I can conquer smoking. My priorities lie at the moment I'm feeling I've got to 63, I just feel.. my priority is to get myself right. So that even if I've only got ten years left I can enjoy those ten years instead of feeling like this.

RB: Ok. So tell me now about this health kick that you've been on because when I spoke to you in Day Case you mentioned that you've lost a huge amount of weight which is fantastic

HWM09: Well my, what I do, is.. we're on a detox at the moment because of Christmas, so I started off this a year ago, I went on a 6-weeks detox with the family where we lived off chicken and fish, where we had no bread, nothing like that at all, um, the odd jacket potato, and we're on that one at the moment because of Christmas because I did put 4lb on over Christmas. But I just eat healthy meals but small amounts, does that make… I have about four little meals a day, and I've been doing the same for my family, and they.. well my daughter, she's lost four stone

RB: That's amazing!

HWM09: Yeah, she looks so different, I keep looking at her ‘cause she looks so different, so looks so beautiful! But I get a bit low because they’re all losing it and I can’t. You know although I’ve lost two stone, I was to have lost the same as they have, you know? But I am older, and these beta-blockers don’t help.

RB: No, beta-blockers don’t help. Can you tell me, um, have you always been big?

HWM09: No, no

RB: How did you start putting on weight?

HWM09: When I hit 50. It was when I hit 50 and you see I’ve always been the one that could eat anything. And my mother used to say to me “You wait til you hit your fifties!” and she was right.

RB: [laughs] Annoying!

HWM09: And you see I came out of this horrific relationship and I met this knight in shining armour and you sort of let go a bit, you relax, so.. do you know what I mean? My eating habits were.. and I didn’t have the nervous energy all the time. And I’ve noticed the twenty-five years I’ve been with him I’ve started slowly putting it on, yeah.

RB: Yeah. And so what then.. what was the sort of catalyst that made you decide to lose weight?

HWM09: It was naughty really because I should have done it years ago, especially when they told me about the diabetes. But about two years ago I was looking at my grandchildren and that’s when I started.. I couldn’t get on the floor and play with them and.. and I was thinking, you know, I’ve got to be there, I’ve got to live for my family, and if I don’t do anything about it I’m gonna be dead by the time I’m sixty. Because my mum did it you see, my mum was a big woman towards the end and she took no notice of the diabetes type 2. And I thought to myself I can’t do that. And that’s when I decided that I’ve got to do.. maybe it’s not.. maybe it’s too late but then I thought no it can’t be I’m only 60. That’s why I did it.

RB: Good for you, good for you. Did you have any advice or what was the.. what did you base your decisions on about how to lose weight?

HWM09: Me. No-one’s.. I’ve never.. I’ve asked the doctors I don’t know how many times. My daughter-in-law went to the doctors. They were prepared to give me a stomach thing but I thought no, I’m not putting something into my body, um, I’ll do this myself. I’ve never had any help from the you know the diabetes people or anyone, I’ve done it all by myself. By reading, you know, I’ve never had a.. I’ve asked them to help me with the diet and they’ve said well you can go here, you can go there. And because I’m.. didn’t want to be walking everywhere I thought oh I’ll just sit and read. This was about two years ago. And I sat down and really read about diabetes 2. And that’s what made me do it in the end.

RB: Right, right

HWM09: There is no help out there, sometimes.

RB: And so the GP, it was the GP who suggested the gastric banding was it?

HWM09: Yeah we talked about it and I came away..

RB: And that was their first option?

HWM09: That was my first option, yeah, I don't want that, I really don't want that. You know? They suggested it to [daughter] too and you know, because [daughter]'s a lot bigger than me – not now she isn't but.. And they.. it made me sad and I thought well if I can't do it for my daughter and they won't help her, I'll do it with her, we all did it

RB: You did it together as a family, yeah. And do you mind me asking [name], what was your peak weight?

HWM09: Er, what was my highest weight? Nearly 18 stone.

RB: 18 stone, yeah, and what are you at now, about 16?

HWM09: 16st4

RB: And do you feel better?

HWM09: Yes, oh god, a part of me feels a hell of a lot better for losing that weight. And my heart feels a little bit better as well, sometimes and not, as I said not as.. bad. God yeah, losing the weight has made me feel a lot better but I want to feel a lot lot better

RB: Sure, so you want to keep losing?

HWM09: Yeah

RB: Yeah. What are the main things that you would say have helped you with losing the weight, both in terms of diet and psychologically – what's helped you the most?

HWM09: I say the.. I don't really know, I don't know if I can answer that one, I don't know

RB: Ok.

HWM09: I don't know actually

RB: That's alright, there's nothing you can put your finger on.

HWM09: No

RB: No. Is there anything that you would say has been a real barrier, a real stumbling block?

HWM09: Help. Help, is the worst barrier. Nobody takes you ser.. If you haven't got.. they can't put a plaster on it they don't really help you.

RB: Ok, yeah, sure. What would you want – if you could design your perfect health service, what kind of help would you want?

HWM09: I would love somebody to sit with me – all the reading I do, yeah, I understand – but I'd love somebody to sit with me and to on a one-to-one – not a slimming club, not Weight Watchers, none of those things, is just sit with me and talk about food diaries, talk about things like that and

am I doing it right? Could I do it better? Do you understand what I mean? Because I'm only going off my own knowledge, um. But yeah that's what I'd like, to go through foods with me, to say well no you can't really have that – I'm only thinking I'll have that because it's got no sugar in it – do you know what I mean? But I don't think about maybe the fat content. I think the sugar content, I think oh great I can have that – do you know what I mean? So.. It's someone to sit and educate me, more than anything.

RB: Sure, Sure. So do you.. are you focussing more on losing the weight than controlling your diabetes or vice versa?

HWM09: I want to get rid of my diabetes. I want to go into remission with my diabetes. And I practically – oh I just don't bother any more – I've gone to the doctor, please help me get out of.. "oh well if you go to Weight.. we'll give you voucher for WeightWatchers" I don't want that! You know? I don't want a voucher for WeightWatchers!

RB: Why don't you want to go to WeightWatchers?

HWM09: Because 1) I get anxious as I told you – if the village hall was a bit of a walk away, I think how would I get there and not feel an idiot when I got in there because I'm breathless and my heart's going everywhere, and then people are going to want to talk to me and I've got to take at least half an hour to get myself back right, so.. I just, because I love people, it's nothing to do with that but it's all down to my health..

RB: It's just the physical effort

HWM09: I'm frightened to death I'd get in there and I'm sweating like a pig, people are talking to me and I can't talk to them, you know what I mean?

RB: Yeah, yeah I do understand what you mean, yeah. So someone to sit down and educate you and go through really healthy eating, and..

HWM09: Yeah. I think what I'm doing is right, well it's showing its right because we're losing the weight and my family are feeling more better in themselves, so I'm doing something right

RB: Yeah absolutely. It's great that you've all done it as a family as well

HWM09: Yes

RB: Has.. do you feel like everyone's really kicked in and got behind it?

HWM09: Yes.

RB: Yeah. Did they take much convincing?

HWM09 Um, I think because of the family that we are, if I get into something that I really want to do as a family, they will do it.

RB: Yeah. In terms of eve.. you know, hopefully you'll have the ablation on Friday, fingers crossed. Once you're back in rhythm - hopefully – will you be thinking about upping your exercise a bit more and getting back on the treadmill?

HWM09: Oh god yes.

RB: When you're at home exercising on the treadmill, do you feel safe doing that?

HWM09: Yes.

RB: Yes. So you don't feel like you would want a hospital gym or anything like that that you could go to?

HWM09 No, I feel safe, er doing that. And you see once I.. my goal is to keep walking on this treadmill, and then I'll be able to walk when I go out for a proper walk.

RB: Yeah, yeah. So sort of train yourself up?

HWM09: Yes

RB: Yeah. And do you set goals for yourself?

HWM09: Sometimes, sometimes not because I find that if I set a goal and it doesn't work right, um, I feel a bit of a failure

RB: Sure, so you want to be sure that you're setting yourself something achievable

HWM09: Yeah, that I can actually do

RB: Yeah, can you give me any examples of that?

HWM09: The weight. I set myself a goal, um, every time I do a weigh-in, every Friday we do a weigh-in, and if I've lost a pound – which we all celebrate – but I go right I'm gonna try and lose two pound next week and gen.. does.. so far I've done that. It's happened. It's like when I went on the scales after Christmas, I'd put on the weight, I said to myself right I'm gonna lose 4 pound and I did.

RB: Wow

HWM09: Yeah

RB: That's brilliant. Everybody's put weight on over Christmas, it's a really funny time to be doing this study – apart from COVID – because before Christmas everyone was going "Oh I'm just letting myself enjoy Christmas" and now everyone's going "I REALLY enjoyed Christmas…"

HWM09: Yeah, no I let myself go for a week because you know, we worked so hard last year at losing this weight that I even said to my.. the kids, let's have a bit of Christmas cake, let's have a proper roast turkey dinner, and, do you know what I mean? And we did. We did for a week.

RB: Yes. What's your overall target for your weight? Do you have a particular weight in mind that you'd like to get to or do you just want to feel better?

HWM09: I don't want to go too skinny because of my age, and even losing the weight I've got has given my a turkey neck now [laughs] they all go.. when I walk past, turkey noise as I walk past..

RB: Oh charming!

HWM09: .. but ideally clothes-wise I'd like to get down to a smaller 16, I think that would do me fine and I think that's about 14 stone if I remember

RB: From where you were before

HWM09: Because if I go too thin, like I was before, at my age I'd look ridiculous.

RB: Ok. Just going back, obviously you had a very good telephone conversation with the arrhythmia nurses, did they.. what did they talk to about with regard to your weight, did they say anything in particular?

HWM09: I think I spoke more because I was telling them about my regime but before I started this health kick, they would constantly say "you've got to lose weight". Constantly, yeah.

RB: Right. How did you feel about them saying that to you?

HWM09: At the time I felt, who the hell do you think you are? [both laugh] But then it clicked in. It all clicked in. Yeah, they were right. You know, they were only doing it for my ow.. I wish I'd listened, years ago darling. I really wish I had.

RB: Mhmm. Why didn't you listen?

HWM09: I don't know. I don't know. Because I wasn't in the right place, I don't think. Um, I don't know really and I wish to god I had. Because I wouldn't be fighting this battle as much as I am now.

RB: Sure. What was.. When they said to you you've got to lose weight, was there any context that they put that in for you, or did they just say you've got to lose weight?

HWM09: Well, you've got to lose weight, really.

RB: 'Cause what I'm finding quite a lot as I'm going through this study and I'm talking to lots of people, is I'm finding lots of people having very similar experiences of people being told by doctors you've got to lose weight, you've got to lose weight, and what quite a lot of people are saying is um, if that, um, if that were put in context like "you are overweight, you need to lose weight, these are the reasons you need to lose weight, these are the potential benefits of losing weight, and here's some help to get you to lose weight" – they felt they would be much more receptive to that, whereas..

HWM09: Yeah, I think you're right

RB: ..when they're just told you've got to lose weight they kind of shut down and went "oh well so should you actually, doctor" or saying "who do you think you are?" – what do you think about that?

HWM09: If they'd have told me, if they'd have told me five years ago that by losing weight it would have helped me so much in my arthritis, in my heart problem, in my head, in um and that you'll live longer, I would have listened. But *nobody ever* said that, they just said "lose some weight". That's all I got, even from my own GP, "Just lose the weight".

RB: Yeah, you see an idea that I'm sort of forming is that we health care professionals think it's so obvious that you should try and be slim, and the benefits are so obvious that we don't feel like we

need to reiterate those again. But lots of people are saying the same thing to me – "if they'd said to me, you need to lose weight *because…*" then I would have listened, and I think we're not doing the *because*, because we think well it's obvious why you should lose weight. But it sounds like you and other people I've spoken to don't agree with that.

HWM09: No. No.

RB: Yes. So when you, before you went on the health kick, before you realised that you couldn't play with your grandchildren and that was obviously a priority for you – had you ever thought about your weight beforehand?

HWM09: Yeah, yeah, it's out of vanity, out of um.. yeah I didn't like being big, I don't like being big. Um and it, it makes me… I have a phobia of death, I have this big phobia of death and the older I got.. I now knowing that I've got to lose this weight, it.. it.. it's helping my phobia, does that make sense?

RB: Yeah, yeah it does

HWM09: But no I don't like being overweight it doesn't affect my head very well

RB: Ok. Yeah, sure. [Name] that's just about all the questions that I have, um, it's been really interesting talking to you..

HWM09: Thank you

RB: .. Is there anything that you wanted to tell me in particular, anything that you think.. you know, this study's about the connection between AF and weight loss and we can help people to manage their weight with AF. What would.. have you got any take-home messages for health care professionals like me?

HWM09: Listen. Listen to your patients. Listen. And don't just say "Just lose weight". Just say to them can I get this for you, can I do that for you? I think people will listen to a lot more. I think they will. And you know you've got a new generation coming through and you should help them. So that they can, when they get to my age, have had that help. I think a lot of problems with.. they think you get to a certain age and that's it. That's how I feel, if I ring up about something "oh well she is in her 60s, just give her a tablet". Do you know what I mean? And I want to come off half the medication I'm.. because I think half the medication I'm on is what makes me feel more ill. To be honest with you. This metaforam makes me feel awful. I.. I come off the.. I did, I did tell the doctor. They didn't help me really, I just rang the doctor after Christmas, I said look I can't these pills any more, he said well don't take 'em. I haven't even spoken to the arthritis people. They made me feel *so ill*. That I stopped taking them. I read on line first, would there be any side-effects, would I have to slowly come off them. I just stopped, 'cause they said you could. And I have felt a little percentage better through not taking them, and I walk a bit better since I stopped taking them. If just people *listened* to you. And, and you gave them that explanation, you know, you lose weight because of this. [Pause] But as I've got older I find that they brush you off more than when you're younger.

RB: There's just one other thing, there's – I don't know if you've seen it in the papers – there's this national trial going on in some places of these sachets, these meal replacement sachets for people with diabetes

HWM09: No, I don't know anything about that

RB: You haven't seen that. It's not every.. I think they're doing it in like five places or something and trialling it but they've had really good results where you start.. instead of having breakfast lunch and dinner you have these meal replacement sachets that you eat every few hours

HWM09: Yeah?

RB: And as the weight starts to come off then you incorporate proper meals again. And the idea is to get people's weight right down to see if they can reverse diabetes which is what you were talking about.

HWM09: Yes

RB: If that.. I mean I don't know if that's going to be rolled out nationally or anything like that, but is that something you would consider?

HWM09: Oh god yes

RB: Obviously you didn't want a gastric band but you would consider eating 6 meal sachets a day in..

HWM09: Yeah, definitely. Oh god yeah. I want to get rid of this diabetes more than anything in the world.

RB: Yeah, yeah ok. That's everything from me [name], thanks so much that's really been helpful. I just want to offer as well, I don't know if you know at the [Hospital] there's a service called Here for Health?

HWM09: Hang on.. Here To Help.. yeah

RB: Here for Health

HWM09: For Health

RB: And they're a really really nice bunch of women who basically they're here for health – if people go in and they want to get their blood pressure checked or they want some advice on such-and-such, they'll spend time and sit down with people. And I don't know if they can tell you anything that you haven't already worked out yourself about diet, but I wondered if it's something that would be.. if you'd like me to refer you to them because I can do that

HWM09: That would be very kind darling, yes I would like that.

RB: Brilliant. I will do then. They'll phone you, I'm not sure when.. and they always do like a phone call first, it used to be like a drop-in centre but with COVID I don't think they're doing that anymore. But I've sent people.. I've referred people before for smoking cessation, and all different sorts of

things so if in future you wanted to cut down on your smoking as well they might be able to help with that.

HWM09: Yeah, that would be brilliant darling, thank you

RB: Brilliant, I mean, as I say I don't know how much you'll get out of it, if it's the sort of thing you want, but it's worth a try isn't it?

HWM09: Of course, anything's worth a try

RB: Yeah. Alright, I'll send them an email today then and just send them your name and date of birth and they'll get in touch with you.

HWM09: That's very kind, thank you

RB: No problem at all, and thank you for talking to me

HWM09: You're very welcome and thank you for being patient with me!

RB: [laughing] No no! That's what I want, this is fantastic!

HWM09: You take care

RB: Because we don't get enough feedback from people and I think that's becoming abundantly clear the more people I talk to. Just to let you know what will happen now is I'll transcribe this conversation that we've had, that'll take me a couple of days probably because I've got a couple more going on as well. And then I may.. I don't send you the whole thing because it's usually about twenty pages, it's absolute agony to read, um, so I usually make a summary and just email it or read it to you over the phone and you can tell me if I've got the gist right, or if there's anything that you want to add or change or anything that you'd rather I didn't say

HWM09: Yeah that's good darling

RB: Can I just ask you a couple of technical-ish questions as well

HWM09: Go on

RB: Your ethnicity

HWM09: My..?

RB: Ethnicity

HWM09: And that means?

RB: Are you white, black, Indian…?

HWM09: [laughing] Oh yeah sorry – see I told you, you gotta have patience with me darling! White.

RB: [laughing] White British?

HWM09: Yeah white British

RB: Fine. And what do you do for work, or did you do for work?

HWM09: Um, when the first lockdown started I lost my job, and no-one's going to employ me, are they?

RB: Oh what were you doing before that?

HWM09: I had a lovely little job of 6 hours a week in a care home, cooking, um I went into semi-retirement and I just loved it. And then the care home they folded at the same time as COVID, so I haven't been employed since. I won't get that sort of little job again, so…

RB: Oh that's such a shame

HWM09: Yes it was but hey

RB: And what's your highest level of education?

HWM09: What do you mean, what..

RB: Did you go to secondary school, college, university

HWM09: Yeah, I went form secondary school to college, and I got all my O-levels and A-levels and then I did a lot of courses, my family are quite snobby and I had to go and do a bloody um "How to be a lady" in Switzerland, all that shit

RB: Oh what like a deportment course? Wow!

HWM09: Yes I had a finishing school, I did it all [laughing]. I'm not proud of it! Took me a long time to get out of that class I'm telling you! [Both laughing] I don't like that class! So, yeah, I did pretty well.

RB: Um and finally, this is one that usually makes people laugh. I like to have a pseudonym for people because I don't want to refer to people as numbers, really, you know "Participant number 9 said this", but I don't want people to be identifiable either, so if I was to give you a pseudonym, what would your name be? Please don't say Batman.

HWM09: I'd have to be.. my family are calling me Dotty Dorothy at the moment..

RB: Dotty Dorothy!

HWM09: So it'd have to be Dotty

RB: Dotty. Perfect. We'll call you Dotty. Thanks ever so much for talking to me, all the best for Friday

HWM09: Thank you darling

RB: And I'll be in touch in a week or so, ok?

HWM09: Ok thank you, take care

RB: Have a nice day

HWM09: And you, bye bye

[END]