

Follow-up appointment at North Shore hospital

On Friday 26 August I turned up at North Shore hospital for my routine follow-up appointment – the one I had postponed twice. It wasn't long before my name was called and a nice young doctor with a cheerful smile welcomed me into the little consultation room. Of course, I had not met him before so I wondered how much he knew about me and my other major health problem. For him it was just a routine appointment following the surgery on 20 July to remove the cyst. For me it was far from routine, and in my unreasonableness I wanted to see someone familiar, someone who knew how desperate I was for an end to the constant dressing changes and why it was such a major issue. I was also horrified to learn that he did not know that I had turned up at ED at North Shore Hospital on 30 July and had a couple of stitches removed and the wound opened up.

I am still having dressing changes every other day and each time I think it will soon be completely healed there has been yet another setback. I told the nice young man (who in answer to my question had told me he was a registrar) that I wanted to see Dr H. the surgeon who had performed the surgery. He checked the wound and then offered to get Dr H. After a bit of a wait Dr H. appeared and looked at the wound and said it was healing nicely. He described what he had found during the operation, and assured me the wound would be completely healed in a couple of weeks or so. I was far from convinced and drove home feeling really tired and a tad depressed at how the health system still has me on such a short leash.

Holidaying at Pukehina beach

Wonderful weather (only one rainy morning during the whole week), great company, lovely food, good books and lots of interesting conversations, including those about being diagnosed with cancer and death and dying (three of the four of us have had or currently have cancer). It was a very memorable and relaxing holiday.

One of my friends willingly took on the task of changing the dressing on my wound every other day which made the holiday possible for me. I got a text on the Sunday just as we arrived at the beach reminding me of the follow-up appointment scheduled for Monday with the surgeon who removed the cyst. I phoned on Monday and explained I was on holiday and then got another appointment which I also had to postpone. These were supposed to be the months I was free of medical appointments and procedures, and medical appointments are just going to have to fit around my plans over the next few months.

Walks along the beach each morning were food for the soul. Soaking up the constantly changing views of the estuary from the other side of the holiday house owned by my friends never failed to impress. I happily settled into a routine of reading the newspaper and doing the Sudoku puzzles over a cup of tea before breakfast, walking along the beach collecting more shells in the morning, and reading books and napping in the afternoon followed by preparing for dinner.

On the Tuesday we all went out to dinner at the Trading Post restaurant near Te Puke to celebrate my 10th month survival anniversary. I am now in double figures and it was wonderful to be able to celebrate this milestone with friends.





[Off to Pukehina beach](#)

The Cartwright conference was a hugely successful event,

despite the National Screening Unit refusing to provide a speaker or two. Professor Marshall Austin came all the way from the USA to carefully explain the problems with New Zealand's plan to change the cervical screening test and warned the audience that it may well turn out to be another "unfortunate experiment" for cervical screening.

The dressing changes for the wound on my neck – which is now healing well – have been sorted, and I am off to Pukehina beach for a well earned holiday. Yippee!