



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A Different Light"

A Different Light - 19 June 2021 "First it was lightning then it was migrainal lights"

Lightning filled the bedroom window in the early hours of the morning, followed by long rumbling bouts of thunder. Later that morning I woke in the dark with another bright light. An all too familiar arch of multi coloured shimmering lights in my vision that zigzagged sharply. Even when I shut my eyes I could still see them. They signalled the start of a migraine and are called migrainal lights or a migraine aura. I used to get them frequently when I was younger. I had not had one for years. They used to be vicious. After the kaleidoscope zigzagging light show, would come an intense headache in the temple making me feel instantly bilious. Locking me into hours of relentless nausea and head pain, the only thing to do would be to grovel in a darkened room until the torture subsided. This more recent recurrence was somewhat alarming, as it brought back memories of these frequent miserable migraine attacks I suffered in the past. This time, however, I did not get the same acute onslaught of hell that I used to. Instead I had a vague shadow of pain in my head and a weird eerie feeling that something neurological (apart from the usual misfires) was going on in my brain. I took it easy. It's the only thing one can do.

Back when I was young, and somewhat easily influenced, I heard about a rather unusual migraine cure that appealed. Basically, as soon as you feel a migraine coming on, as soon as you get 'the lights', drink as much straight spirits as you can stomach. The rationale is that you may get a hangover, but it's better than a migraine. The theory had something about the blood vessels in your brain dilating and then constricting or vice versa. Anyway, I did try it a couple of times much to the disbelief and repulsion of those around me. It didn't work. It did relieve the angst at the start of the affliction when you get the lights and you're filled with dread about what's coming down the line. But the migraine would out trump any mitigating sensations the alcohol had to offer, leaving me the worst for wear. Do not try at home, or anywhere, dear reader.

Apparently it's rare to get migraines when your over fifty. As it did its thing I lay there and thought piteously why me? why now? As back in the day I then started to try and analyse what I had done to bring this on. Many people who have neurological conditions which come on seemingly randomly also go through this self-searching reflection to find a reason, a trigger. I couldn't think of anything I'd done out of the ordinary. The usual slings and arrows of work, a wholesome vegetable soup for dinner, an alcohol free day, it couldn't have been the three Hob Nob biscuits? Surely not. Maybe it was just a random divine act, a message from the heavens, a celestial message? Ah, the lightning, the donner and the blitzen - that must have been it ? ! Nah! Get a grip! Sometimes things happen and you have to take it easy. Zzzzz....

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.