



Iris's Story

“...instantly alert when matters of improving health are indicated. These take precedence over reducing wrinkles...”

I am now a widow, having lost my husband in 1996 after 18 short years of marriage, the mother of three men and a grandmother of three boys and a precious granddaughter.

I am a British Citizen and live in the United Kingdom, but I come originally from a small Caribbean West Indian Island, called Montserrat.

I first came to England in 1962, on a bursary scholarship to pursue a course in Infant Methods at the Cambridge Institute of Education. I was awarded a Dip Ed at the end of this course, after which I returned home, where I did some work in reforming the island-wide approach to educating children up to the age of 7.

In January 1965, I became a lecturer/tutor at the Leeward Islands Teacher Training College in the nearby Island of Antigua, which only lasted 18 months because in August 1966 I obtained another Scholarship to do a degree at London University, Goldsmiths College.

After completing my degree course, I started as a teacher in the London Borough of Hackney.

In 1977, I became a Head Teacher in that local authority where I remained until I took early retirement in 1995, upon which I was immediately offered a post as a part-time lecturer/supervisor, until 1997 when I left to take care of my then first baby grandchild.

I might also mention that in 1984 the Lord Chancellor appointed me as a lay Magistrate to the Inner London Sessions — a post I filled until 2006, when I retired from active duties and my name was included on the Supplementary List.

I do not hold any formal posts now, but since then I have kept busy working with and for people in the community — signing documents, writing references, as agent for charity collections, teaching ESL, working within my church community, being a School Governor, undergoing Training for Governance, being a hands-on Grandma, being involved in private catering, and so on....

My GP sent me a letter inviting me to consider taking part in a research study into hypertension. At my age and with my history since 1969 of raised blood pressure, I seized the opportunity and said, “Yes please”! That was in December of 2013. I came to the clinic at the **William Harvey Clinical Research Centre** in Jan 2014 where the medical staff interviewed me. I had no hesitation in joining the **British Heart Foundation Pathway Study**.

One is instantly alert when matters of improving health are indicated. These take precedence over reducing wrinkles, getting rid of grey hairs, cosmetic surgery, etc.!

The reception and introduction were welcoming, a positive experience. Any anxiety disappeared. The clinical director's succinct outline of what the trials entailed, and his relaxed and friendly manner put me at ease. Because I was not sure of anything at this stage, this was of optimum importance. He welcomed me to the study after deciding I was suitable and so my involvement started.

I found members of the team efficient and with a firm grasp of what my programme plan was. We patients tend to be fearful and lacking in confidence. We are so traumatized by interaction with medical personnel we became childish in our anxiety. Their reassurance helped me overcome this.

I was not allowed to make a snap decision to join the trial. I was given detailed information of the plan to peruse. Most of the experiences were positive. There were only a few hiccups which were immediately addressed.

My family and friends were all enthusiastic and wanted to know as much as possible about the trial. I have talked at length with several friends and members of my family about the programme. A few tried to join. One went back to Trinidad, another was over 80 and could not join. I am now trying to introduce a young man to the programme.

My family are delighted with my progress and the personal interest the staff show me. I think it was a wonderful day this came to my notice and am pleased with the outcome.

I knew little or nothing about clinical trials before I joined the volunteers. To lay people, this can be complicated and difficult to follow. On my study, the doctors tried out various drugs in a systematic way to see how patients responded to each and to find a "best fit" to improve their health. There is an ethical element which demands patient safety and open feedback to the organisers of any harmful results. There is an individual input in these trials.

There are some issues about clinical trials that I had not been aware of. For example, I have heard about people being paid to take part in a trial where some young people suffered harmful results. I would not have been happy to take part if I were healthy. And I have a latent mistrust in the motives of drug companies whose intent is mostly on profit.



I think the NHS should fund research. This could save money ultimately.