

Podcast 114 - Having an Operation in Australia - The Preparation

by Rob McCormack - Thursday, October 31, 2019

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Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 114 – Having an Operation in Australia – The Preparation

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Hi,

A short time ago I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The doctor who diagnosed me advised that I needed an operation in order to get well again. His advice was that I should have my prostate surgically removed, which would remove the cancer. Undergoing the operation has had a major impact on me but, thanks to the amazing skills of the surgeon and the other medical staff involved, I am currently recovering from the operation and I am hoping to be fully cured. In this podcast, I would like to talk about my experience of preparing for the operation and how it set me on the path to recovery from the cancer. In the next podcast, I will talk about my recovery after the operation.

As we get older, it is a good idea to go for regular checkups with a doctor, to ensure that we can stay healthy as we age. For example, every year I have a set of blood tests which measure a number of indicators about your health. One of these tests showed that perhaps there might be something wrong with my prostate. My local doctor suggested that I should see another doctor who has special knowledge and skills in investigating and treating this type of problem. In Australia, we call these types of doctors ‘specialists’. To see a specialist, you need to be referred by your local doctor.

My specialist examined me and then I had some more tests. Finally he had all the information he needed. He rang me and told me that, unfortunately, I had prostate cancer. That was a shock, I can tell you. I can remember where I was when I received the phone call. I was out riding my motorbike and had stopped by the roadside in a small township to wait for my friend who I was meeting there. That’s when my phone rang. However, my specialist was quick to advise that, because it was not a very aggressive type of cancer, I could avoid an operation for the time being, but that I should be monitored every 3 months. Monitored means that the growth of the cancer should be regularly checked. Perhaps the cancer would not grow to become dangerous. However, 3 months later at my next checkup with my specialist, he paused after examining me and said to me, ‘I think it’s time to take it out’. I paused only briefly. I didn’t need any convincing. I trust my specialist totally. He is extremely skilled and experienced and I said, ‘Okay, let’s do it.’ So began my journey of having my operation to remove my cancer.

My specialist and his team of assistants organized a date for the operation in a private hospital near his surgery, not far from my home.



Warringal Private Hospital in Melbourne.

First, I had to provide a range of information to the hospital about my health and my history of any medical problems. Luckily, I was able to provide this information online, so that I did not need to fill in any paper forms. It took me around 30 minutes to answer all the online questions about my health. For example, I had to advise what operations had I had in the past, whether I was allergic to any medicines or anesthetic, my next of kin, plus a range of other health related questions. This information allows the hospital staff to know exactly what to expect when they treat me, so that they can take account of any special medical needs I may have. Only then can they properly manage my treatment.

My specialist's assistant also set up a meeting with a specially qualified nurse who could provide a range of information about my upcoming operation, so that I fully understood what would happen to me. The operation was quite complicated and would last around 3 to 4 hours. It was great that my wife was also involved in this meeting, so that she too could understand the operation and be able to better assist me in my recovery at home. I was told that I would be in hospital for 4 or 5 days after the operation, before I could go home.

On the day of my operation, I had to be at the hospital by 8am. Prior to this, I was told that I should have nothing to eat or drink from midnight on the previous day. This is because you must have an empty

stomach when you are put to sleep for an operation. I can remember waiting in the admissions area with my wife with my bag containing just a few possessions including my phone charger, a change of clothes and a book which I thought I might read during my stay in the hospital. At around 8.15am a nurse came out and asked us to come through into a room with a hospital bed. There I was given a wrist identification band and I was once again asked about any allergies. At every step of the way, I was asked to confirm who I was and my date of birth. I guess this is to ensure that there is no confusion about who I was and what operation I was having. At this point I also changed into a hospital gown and I put on long pressure socks which went up to my knees. I wore these until I left the hospital. They are designed to help prevent a blood clot forming in my legs after the operation. I liked them because they also kept my feet warm. Once all this was done, I then stayed in the room on the hospital bed, waiting until I would be called for my operation. My wife stayed with me. After about an hour, they advised me that my operation would be earlier than expected. At that point, I said goodbye to my wife and they wheeled my bed into a special hospital room near the operating theatres, where those having an operation were waiting. Once again they checked my identity and asked me about any allergies. My anaesthetist visited me and asked me again about allergies and my previous operations. The anaesthetist was the doctor who would put me to sleep. He would also make sure that I stayed asleep during the operation. He seemed very experienced and he put me at ease, which I appreciated. Lastly, my specialist, the surgeon, came to see me and said that all was ready and I would go to the operating theatre soon. Again, he reassured me and gave me confidence that everything would be okay. I appreciated that.

Then I waited what seemed like a long time, although it probably wasn't that long. Eventually two nurses came and I was wheeled on my bed into the operating theatre. The thing I remember most was the large light hanging above me. They lifted me from my bed onto the operating table and I knew that soon I would be put to sleep. Strangely, I didn't feel that nervous or worried. I knew that I was in good hands. After just a few minutes, my anaesthetist put me to sleep and at that point my memory stops.

In my next podcast, I will talk about my recovery from the operation.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

[WpProQuiz 117]

Vocabulary

admissions = the place in a hospital where you go in or where you are admitted

advised = when someone tells you to do something because they know more than you do

aggressive = (here) when something spreads quickly

allergic = when you react badly to something

amazing = (here) when something or someone is very, very good

anesthetic = something you take which makes you go to sleep, so that you can't feel anything

appreciated = liked

assistants = helpers

avoid = when you have stopped something from happening

blood clot = when your blood forms into a lump inside your body

cancer = a type of disease which can be very dangerous

checkup = when a person or thing is checked to see if everything is working correctly

confusion = when you are not sure about something

convincing = (here) when you become certain about something as a result of what someone else has said

cured = to get better, to get your health fully back again

dangerous = when you can get sick, hurt or die from something

diagnosed = when a doctor decides what sickness you have

ensure = to make sure

examined = to look at something closely

gown = a type of clothing

impact = effect

indicators = things which show something else

investigating = to look for something

medical = to do with your body and your health

next of kin = the close members of your family. For example, wife, husband, father, mother

nurses = specially trained people who look after patients in a hospital

operating table = the special table you lie on in an operating theatre

operating theatres = the special place in a hospital where operations are done

operation = (here) when a doctor uses instruments to cut into your body, in order to fix or remove something making you sick

possessions = the things that belong to you

pressure socks = socks which are very tight

prior = previous, earlier

properly manage = correctly look after

prostate = a part inside a man's body near the bladder

put me at ease = to make someone feel happy, to stop them from worrying

qualified = when you have received special training, usually from a school or university

recovery = the period or time when you get well again

referred = when you are told to meet with another person

suggested = when someone has advised you to do something

surgeon = a doctor with special skills who can perform an operation

surgery = (here) the place where you go to see a doctor

surgically removed = when a doctor takes a part of your body out, in an operation

take account = be aware of, know about

treating = (here) when a doctor or a nurse does things to make you well again

treatment = what the doctor or nurse does to you, in order that you get well again

trust = when you believe someone else, when you accept what they say

undergoing = to experience something

wrist identification band = a special piece of paper put around your wrist with your name and other

information about you

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