

Jack's story: "I never thought I had a heart problem"

Jack Morrison is a dedicated husband, father to six and grandfather to nine. This past March as he was getting ready to celebrate his 77th birthday, he gave *Diabetes Voice* the opportunity to discuss his diabetes and CVD.

When were you diagnosed with diabetes?

I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in 1984. In those early days, I remember my doctor – a general practitioner – trying one or two oral medications on me but in the end, there seemed to be only one solution. He put me on insulin right away. For 35 years now, I've been dependent on insulin.

When did you learn about cardiovascular disease (CVD)?

Well, it's a rather complicated story. In 1999, my brother was taken to the hospital emergency for a heart attack. During the surgical procedure, there were complications and he died very unexpectedly. It was tragic; he was 61 years old and left his wife and four daughters behind. My brother's death was the first time I had a direct experience with heart disease. A little later in the year, I went to the doctor for a regular check-up and I told him about my brother. He told me I should see a cardiologist just to be safe. That was during autumn in 1999. A few days later, I went to the cardiologist and while running a few tests on me, he got very alarmed and told me he was admitting me to the hospital. A few days later, I had emergency quadruple bypass surgery.

I never thought I had a heart problem. I thought I only had a diabetes problem. I guess you could say, my brother saved my life.

The fact is I didn't really learn about cardiovascular disease until after my quadruple bypass surgery which was

16 years after being diagnosed with diabetes. However, no one told me during that time that there was a connection between my diabetes and the bypass. After the surgery, I was in recovery for months. I went to physical therapy and I was at the doctor's quite a bit. Unfortunately, none of the doctors – such as my primary care doctor, the cardiologist, and others – sadly no one has ever sat down and discussed my heart problem and how it was ultimately connected to diabetes.

In April 2017, Jack had valve replacement surgery. His recovery is going well.

Many thanks to Jack Morrison for the courage to share his story.

