

Sharon, East Riding of Yorkshire



In the summer of 2023, I was lucky enough to have two almost back-to-back holidays. However, on our return to the UK following the second break, I noticed I had an irritating cough, which I attempted to ignore as much as possible. I assumed I'd either picked something up on the plane, or else it must have been because of sleeping in air-conditioned rooms.

Heading into the autumn, I was on the way to a client meeting when I heard an NHS radio campaign about a persistent cough lasting more than 10 weeks. It stated that it *could* be something more sinister and that you really should get it checked out. It dawned on me that my cough had been lingering for around 12 weeks now, so I really ought to get it looked at.

Once home, a quick Google search confirmed my suspicions - I must have laryngeal cancer. After all I had all the symptoms (actually, I didn't, but in my mind I'd ticked all the boxes). But eventually, everyone talked me in to seeing an actual health professional rather than summarising what I read on the internet!

I must admit, initially I was slightly concerned as the first available appointment I was offered was with my surgery's 'advanced nurse practitioner'. I'd not had any surgery appointments since my pregnancies some 18-20 years earlier, so I wasn't sure what to expect and was perhaps thinking that I really needed to see 'the doctor' if it was something serious.

Anyway, an appointment is better than none I decided, so off I popped. I met a fabulous, vastly experienced advanced nurse practitioner, Rosie, who listened to my symptoms (irritating, but not hacking cough; scratchy throat; occasional 'cracking voice' and persistent need to clear my throat). She immediately reassured me there was very little likelihood that I had any form of cancer – my age, the fact I'm not overweight, I'm a non-smoker and not an excessive drinker put my levels of risk as low. However, she said that she would refer me for tests to rule out anything serious. She also told me she suspected, based on the symptoms I'd described to her, that it was more likely to be related to acid reflux irritating the lining of my throat.

She took my bloods for an extensive range of tests and prescribed me (I didn't even realise advanced nurse practitioners could do this!) some proton pump inhibitors to prevent any acid reflux issues in the meantime. The blood test results came back through on my NHS app, so it was all super easy. Rosie's calmness combined with pragmatic approach instantly put me at ease and I started to focus on getting the relevant tests done.

Luckily for me, it all turned out fine and I needed neither further tests nor any medication, but I am still grateful to Rosie for treating me with expediency and thoroughness, not satisfied to let me just 'get on with it' (which would be my naturally inclination!) without ruling everything out first.