Dear Gillian,

I'm writing to you to tell you about the way I was told I have Multiple Sclerosis; it's a long story so I'll start at the beginning.

During January 2013 I went on a health and fitness kick. I was soon hooked, attending classes three times a week – I loved it. I'm the type of person who doesn't like to be in one place for long and crave company, always flitting around. Then in May I twinged my back, which put me out of action for a week. It soon cleared up but left me with pins and needles in my feet, which slowly started working their way up my legs. I naturally assumed this was to do with my back, trapped nerve etc.

Over the next three weeks I went to see a physiotherapist who told me I had a bulging disc pressing on my sciatic nerve. After several treatments the pins and needles were still progressing up my body to my waist so I decided to go and see a local chiropractor. He conducted tests on me and concluded that my back was healthy and that the problem was neurological.

That was a very scary word to hear at the age of 19, when you just think you have a bad back. He mentioned that it was probably a vitamin B deficiency, so recommended that I visit the doctor for blood tests. He then took my mother aside and told her that there was a possibility that it could be MS.

After hearing that I could have, what I thought to be a life-ending neurological disease, I went home and cried. I cried a lot. I knew nothing about what MS was. As far as I knew I was going to be in a wheelchair and dead within a few years. Bang went my dreams.

Within a week I'd seen several doctors who all agreed with my chiropractor and I'd had blood tests done and the results all came back normal. I was then referred to a neurologist for further tests. My parents decided to pay for me to go privately to speed things up, as I was still continuing to get worse. By the time I saw the consultant my hands had started to go numb.

The consultant was absolutely lovely, so much so that both myself and my mother left his office and promptly burst into tears, not only because he also thought I had MS but also because he was so kind and genuinely concerned about my well being. I was put onto the waiting list for an MRI.

By the time I had my MRI, I had had to stop working as a Foot Health Practitioner due to numbness in my hands – I couldn't use a pen or a fork, let alone a scalpel! This was really hard to stomach as I was always an active person and then so quickly I was practically housebound. I couldn’t drive due to numbness in my feet – I couldn’t feel the pedals! I was a mess.

Then a fortnight after my MRI, I woke up with a killer headache. Due to the fact that my mum suffers from migraines, I assumed it was just that. Throughout the day the pain in my right eye began to be unbearable. I dosed myself up with anti-inflammatory medicine and tried to sleep off the ‘migraine’. Then over the next couple of days I noticed my vision was really blurry and I was struggling to see. A trip to my local optician and then the eye hospital left me with a diagnosed case of optic neuritis.

The next day I had a phone call from my local hospital - the eye consultant had been in touch with my neurologist and they needed to see me ASAP at the hospital. Me, being highly emotional, cried all the way down there! By the time I finally got to see the doctor and was prodded and poked (again!!) I had calmed down. She then sat on the side of my bed and told me that due to my two disabling relapses and the lesions shown on the MRI, I have MS.

She left the cubicle and both my mum and I burst into… laughter! I think it was the pure relief at finally having a diagnosis and the end of the dreaded limbo land!

The next few weeks and months all merged into one because I was off work and still coming to terms with everything. Fortunately I was able to go back to work, that has been a Godsend; it really keeps me occupied.

I try to keep as positive as I can; I find that is half the battle. I’ve been taking Copaxone for about a month now and I’m getting on well with it.

Don’t lose hope; you never know what tomorrow may bring.

Emily xxx