



Tony Webb, THINK AORTA Regional Lead – UK & Ireland

Just before Christmas 2020, Rocky, my partner of 30 years collapsed while taking a shower. He described feeling a loud “pop” inside his chest, but quite quickly recovered. It was alarming, so I called 999. The paramedics thought heart attack or stroke, and he was taken to hospital for investigation. After 24 hours of tests (including a head CT scan but sadly, no chest imaging) he was discharged without a diagnosis or any follow up plan.

Back at home, he seemed well and completely normal. Two days later, I walked into the bedroom to find him collapsed on the floor. Another 999 call brought two ambulances and six paramedics, who worked incredibly hard to resuscitate him without success.

It was eight long, dreadful days before the Coroner's office called with the results of his autopsy. The cause of death: bleeding into the pericardium from an aortic dissection. That was my brutal introduction to aortic dissection. I was left believing it was very rare and difficult to diagnose - one of those tragic, unforeseeable things.

Fast forward three and a half years, and a chance meeting with Lisa Skinner – the charity's Bereavement Support Lead – who was wearing an *Aortic Dissection Awareness* T-shirt - introduced me to the national patient charity and its vital work.

I am incredibly honoured and humbled to have been invited to take on the role of **THINK AORTA Regional Lead for the UK and Ireland**. It's exciting to become part of a campaign with real potential to reduce avoidable mortality. There is already a committed and knowledgeable team of professionals, educators, and speakers spreading this lifesaving message. I'm looking forward to getting to know this group and building on the great work already being done. Together, we'll continue to share best practice and grow the **THINK AORTA** campaign.

I'd love to hear from anyone interested in learning more about **THINK AORTA**, contributing ideas, or becoming a speaker or educator. We're developing a programme to “train the trainers,” so if you have a story to tell, we can help you build presentation skills and gain confidence in public speaking. Please get in touch – even if it's just for a buddy chat!

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