

My name is Yole and I have been diagnosed with Achalasia - in the UK in the 2010. But my long journey for a correct diagnose started far before, when I was still living in Italy. At the age of 19 years old, big storms crossed my family which somehow affected my health, I guess. I used to be very strong, an active and healthy athlete since a very young age, with passion also for singing and skating, but suddenly I showed the signs of a serious eating disorder. Underweight, weak and all the time with this sense of burning in my stomach, headaches, sleeping troubles and confusion. In a short while I was diagnosed as Anorexic.



But the absurd thing was, and which nobody never wanted understand, that I actually I wasn't refusing the food at all, actually I was desperately hungry at all the time, but not able to hold the food in my stomach, or at the least this was my feeling at that time. Nobody believed me and my family persuaded me to take the drugs prescribed to me. Fact is that after a year and half I got back in the track, again strong, active and with no much troubles for eating, except for the dry foods like sandwiches or biscuits. It wasn't a big deal for me and I just continued to carry on my life and my studies. I become eventually a professional singer, and some years later I started to have problems with my voice with a sensation of lump in the throat and pain between stomach and breast. The voice started to disappear with a persistent inflammation at the vocal cords, and at the night I was waking up more and more often from heartburn and intense cough. I was also noticing strange stains on my pillow the morning after, and recurrent infections with my gums too, which was making my work as singer harder to attain day after day. Shortly became again difficult swallow the food, I was losing weight fast and getting weak again, with the same symptoms I experienced at the age of 19, but I actually was already 40. I went to my GP with a lot of questions, and then to a larynx specialist, did X Rays, then my first Barium Meal, but they couldn't come out with any clear diagnose. In 2008 I moved in UK for a better chance of work and which actually I couldn't gain a cause of my recurrent sicknesses. I was already under weight, struggling to swallow and feed my self also with baby food, with recurrent sense of confusion and in pain most of the time a cause of strong spasm. In the spring of 2010 my GP didn't know how help me anymore and finally, and I repeat" finally", **I was referred to Gastroenterology Department at the St Thomas & Guys**. After the tests of the case, HD Manometry and Bario Contrast, came out a clear diagnose of Achalasia type II and I was also suffering of GERD. With Upper Surgeon we decided for a first dilatation which gave me again the joy to feel the food enter my stomach and come back to feed my self near to normal. But that joy didn't last for long, after 8 months I was struggling again with food and liquids. Referred again at the St Thomas, the Upper Surgeon offered me a second Dilatation, which last lesser. 4 months later I was again everyday battling with my blended food, unable to push it down by the oesophagus. Another manometry showed that my peristalsis was seriously compromised, there were scars along the oesophagus and early signs of deformation.

At that stage there was no other choice, my only chance to get back to feed my self was the **Heller's Myotomy** (which I tried to avoid since at the first stage for some reasons). In November 2011 I had my Heller's but the ability to come back to eat solids came many months later, recurrent episodes of spasms and reflux made harder and painful my recovery for the first 2 years. Slowly I got back in my life and my activities, but I never could come back to sing a cause of permanent damages on my cords made by the acid reflux along the years. I always considered my Upper Surgeon the person who gave me back "a life to live", today I can say I should trust him more since at the first and make the HM my first choice, because everything would be gone easier. The Heller's even if the oldest treatment used for Achalasia is still the most effective in the long term, even for a patient like me. In fact, after 8 years since the Heller's I restarted with swallowing problems, spasm, regurgitation and weight loss. An endoscopic exam showed a deformed oesophagus with narrow passages again, but the LES was actually in good shape. My Upper Surgeon suggested me to try again with a **dilatation**. We did and it has worked out, 6 months after I am still fine and my life runs busy as usually. I understood, whatever treatment I would have in the future that the most important thing is, and will be, to keep my oesophagus clear from acid reflux, the treatments will last longer and my life with Achalasia will be easier.