



Speaking from Experience Asthma in Adults

Transcript for chapter 3 of 12: Changing attitudes

John: Right back, when I originally had asthma - when people of my generation had asthma as kids - there was this thing about it being psycho-somatic. It was a mental thing. If you could just pull yourself together, you wouldn't get asthma. Of course that's, you know, insane.

De: I come from a culture where nobody gives a toss. We're all quite happy to say "Oh yes, we wheeze, we do this, we do that." It's not viewed as anything peculiar in Britain at all.

John: There's that terrible, terrible fear. Because I didn't know what was happening. And no one ever explained it. The doctor would be called, and he would say, "Oh my goodness."

Margaret and Michael: In childhood, the pressures that I faced most predominately because of my asthma would be the needing to keep up with the other children, and knowing the limitations that were put upon me.

John: You would be a long way from home, and then suddenly you'd have it - an attack of asthma. And there was that terrible embarrassment and shame thing about you having to get back in the car with one of the other parents, and they had to drive you all the way back to Melbourne to your mum and dad. So it's confusion, anger and shame. I was ashamed of having this thing.

De: People are encouraged occasionally to view themselves as a victim of this dreadful, life-threatening chronic illness. And if people are encouraged to view themselves as a victim, then they will do so, and they will encourage the people around them to do so. I don't happen to feel like a victim of anything.

John: I still have a tendency, if I start getting slightly wheezy in a situation, I'll go out the toilet to have a quick puff of the ventolin and then come back in again, so that people won't know.

De: So asthmatics maybe keep quiet about the fact that they're asthmatic, over here. And that's terribly dangerous, because if the other people around you don't know that you're asthmatic, then they won't have the faintest idea of what to do if you have an attack.

Arthur: The information that's available to the general public today is far greater than it ever was at that time. More people are becoming affected by asthma, and it's more widely known amongst the community. I don't think there's any stigma attached to anybody with asthma.