London Marathon Journey – December

I’m a member of a virtual choir. The reality of so many people with so few technical skills meeting up each week via Zoom to rehearse, is mostly hilarious. Yet last week, reading some lyrics of Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas about friends being “near to us, once more” caught my emotions completely off guard. We, like many people, have lost friends during the pandemic. Also, as a transplant recipient, my donor’s family are never far from my thoughts at Christmas time.

So this year, my festive rituals of dropping off parcels, sharing the gingerbread lattes and crumbling mince pies, have vanished, leaving me instead with the company of the person in the mirror.

Luckily, when I complete the recommended running “drills” , I can’t see myself. The displays of squats, lunges, high arms and skips, in public spaces, make me very self – conscious. I’ve had some interesting looks (mainly sympathetic) from passers-by. I can deal with looking a bit of a muppet though if the trade-off is worthwhile. So far, it seems to be bringing more awareness of where various parts of my body are at any given time (even the pesky right foot)!

I’m now trying to run three times per week. Some weeks it’s fine and actually, in the absence of my normal work schedule, I like the routine. Other times it is a challenge and certainly the week of my review at clinic , it all lapsed a bit.

I’ve been advised that I should be running a distance of 7km ( just over 4 miles) at the moment, building to 10km (6 miles) in the New Year. Core strength and hip mobility are also suggested. Cue the dreaded planks and drawing circles in the air with my toes.

Hopefully, in January, the registration for the London Marathon will open and Louise and I can get that step completed for the FHLTA place. For now, the expectation is that it will be a “normal” event along the iconic and well-trodden route, but I am also open to the fact that it may need to become a “virtual” race. Normally it is an international affair with around 40, 000 runners competing. In the light of the Covid situation, the organisers might view it as too great a risk, and I think I need to prepare myself for other options. If the pandemic has taught me anything, it is the value of a flexible approach!

As a clinically vulnerable NHS staff member I was humbled and overwhelmed to be offered a corona virus vaccine last week. My understanding is that this could help my body recognise the virus, but that my reduced immune system would still not necessarily put up the greatest of fights. I mention this only because it reminds me of the initial reason for applying to the FHLTA London Marathon ballot. My aim was to do whatever I could to tip the balance ever so slightly in my favour, should I encounter corona virus, by keeping as fit as possible. The option of raising awareness and funds for the FHLTA at the same time proved an irresistible combination! I’ve been out running today and managed to complete six miles (a little ahead of my schedule). When I’m running I’m conscious of lots of things : the wind, the cold, the puddles, but also that I will be representing a group of individuals who have had a really hard time in 2020. Shielding was no fun : it was frustrating, it was isolating and, at times, demoralising too. Surely 2021 can only bring better things? I am excited to move forwards now and continue my journey of discovery. Step by muddy step!