

Hello and welcome to English Practice for Healthcare, a podcast designed to help you improve your English confidence by listening to real conversations with English speakers.

If this is your first time listening, then hello and thank you for choosing this podcast to support your English learning. I'm Helena and I'm an English language teacher but I'm also a registered nurse. I've taken a break from nursing due to some health problems of my own, but this has only increased my interest in talking to people about their own health experiences and to learn more about how health impacts people's lives.

Because these are natural conversations, we are talking quite fast so you might find it useful to read what we are saying as you listen and to check the spelling of any vocabulary that is new to you by using the transcript, which is free for every episode on and it's on my website to download www.englishpracticeforhealthcare.com. As we go through the episode, I will also explain some of the language that comes up and set questions you can answer to test your listening, that you can try and answer as we go along if you would like to.

As the themes of each episode are about health then this is the perfect listening practice for any healthcare professionals learning English. However, as always please remember this is not designed for you to make any medical decisions but to help you feel more comfortable in your own conversations with your patients.

Ok, so let's get started with episode 6!

Have you ever broken a bone?

And have you ever had to receive medical treatment in a foreign country?

In episode 4 we heard from Jack who received treatment for his ear infections in Spain.

In this episode you will hear from Kevin. Kevin broke his leg, or we can also say fractured his leg, whilst skiing in France.

I have split this interview with Kevin into two parts.

In part 1, which is this episode, you will hear about the two different surgeries that Kevin required after he broke his leg. The first one was in France and the second one was in England.

Part 2, which will be the next episode released, is about the time following his second surgery.

Ok, so, Kevin is from the city of Sunderland, which is in the Northeast of England. He there, he therefore has a Sunderland accent. This is different to the Geordie accent, which is from the Newcastle and Tyneside area, this is also in the Northeast of England, but we don't call the accent from Sunderland a Geordie accent. So, you'll will hear me mention this to Kevin at the start of the interview.

In the first half of this episode, you'll hear Kevin describe what happened and the treatment he required following his skiing accident in France.

So, some language to listen out for and questions to answer:

'Funnily enough'. This is an example of an idiom. In English we use a lot of idiomatic expressions, and these can sometimes be quite confusing because the meaning isn't literal.

So, 'funnily enough' is used to describe a detail that is surprising, often something that is a strange coincidence. For example, when you are thinking about someone and then you see them unexpectedly. So try and listen out for what surprising detail Kevin uses this idiom for when describing his accident.

Secondly, you will hear Kevin describe the time of day his accident took place as 'dusk'. Dusk is the time of day before night when the sun is setting and its beginning to get dark. So that's dusk

The time just before nightfall.

OK and thirdly, why was Kevin's break or why was Kevin's fracture more complex than other types of fractures?

So listen out for Kevin talk about this.

Ok, lets begin!

OK so hi, Kevin

Hi

How are you?

Not so bad

Good, good thank you for talking to us today and can I just ask first, where are you from?

Uh I'm originally from Newcastle or around Newcastle, Sunderland, but I've lived in Sheffield now for 30, 35 years

And is there an accent in Newcastle?

There is an accent in Newcastle uh mine, isn't a Newcastle accent, it's more of a Sunderland accent and it's probably got a bit softer as I've been away for well maybe 40 years, 40 odd years

OK, so it's not the Geordie accent

No

OK that's the accent in Newcastle, OK and the experience you had with your health that we're going to talk about today uh so that happened some time ago, is that right?

Yeah, it was something like 2000, 2001

Mmm mm uh so where were you?

Uh on a skiing holiday so late in the day classic time of the day when accidents happen you've been skiing all day, you're tired, dusk is uh falling and you're coming down the mountain going fairly slowly and I fell and suffered a tibia and fibia fracture complicated because it was, I didn't know at the time, but it was a um a spiral frac fracture

A spiral fracture

Which apparently is a little more complicated than a straight break

OK, so you were on the ski slope at the time?

Yeah, when I was after the accident I was taken off the slopes first of all, I was taken off by a ski guy who pulls the stretcher down then you get transferred to a Skidoo, he takes it down, then the Skidoo transfers you to an ambulance and the ambulance takes you to the local hospital and you're then admitted and I don't think the operation was that day cause it was quite late so I think following day there was when we had the operation

Right

But the uh probably one of the the main problem at the beginning was uh getting the ski boot off, so the ski boot the break was just above the ski boot so it was quite difficult taking the ski boot off without causing a problem

Mmm mm

And I remember um when they took the boot off, it was very painful and I think I screamed

Right

And scared everybody who was in the waiting room

Oh gosh so can you remember what was going through your mind at the the time of the accident when it actually happened?

No, not really, because the accident just happened one minute you're standing up, next minute you're lying down and you know you've broken it. Funnily enough, the guy behind me who I was skiing with was a doctor

Right

So he came and I do remember uh a woman stopping uh and I'd I remember lying there in the snow and my head was on her lap and so that uh was quite a thing, but otherwise I don't remember very much to be honest

Right

Uh until I got to the hospital

OK and when did you find out that you needed an operation?

Uh I think it was fairly obvious they were going to do it they there wasn't much discussion about it actually because I suppose it's a bit like a conveyor belt the hospital in France because obviously it's on the ski slopes and they're used to dealing with accidents all the time so they have a bit of a system in place so there wasn't much discussion as to what was going to happen and uh I just took it for granted they were going to set it, but they don't ask you or tell you uh so I was hanging around the following day all day waiting for the operation uh and it wasn't until uh evening that I was uh prepped and ready to go so it was already dark by then

Mm mm

And uh yeah, it was I remember being wheeled down to the theatre

So in that time, between waiting for your operation, did you have to just keep your leg just completely still?

I honestly can't remember. I don't remember. Yeah, must have been immobile, it was probably in a splint

Mm mm

But uh that was for the day during the day, yeah, must have been, but I don't really remember that that bit

And was it fairly painful while you were waiting?

No, wasn't painful

Oh ok

Wasn't painful I don't know if they've given me some sort of drugs, but I don't remember it being that painful

Mm-hmm

Umm yeah

So how were you getting your information? Because if you were in France was there

Yeah, Yeah, I do speak a bit of French, so I was getting the gist of what was happening but as I say, the there didn't seem to be much communication

I remember the uh anaesthetic I was expecting a general anaesthetic and uh they said, right, you're ready for the epidural and I said epidural? I thought they'd be a general anaesthetic and they just looked at me and there was an orderly up one side of each of me and they both, lifted me up off of the trolley then as I was asking what was happening, they put the epidural in my back and that was it

So there was no coming round because you weren't so you weren't under general, so it wasn't like waking up afterwards

No, no so you you're totally aware they wheeled me in and I was totally aware as to what was happening, could see what was happening

Wow

In the reflections in the window I could hear what was happening

Wow

It was the end of the day and I got the impression the surgeon was a bit tired he was quite an angry type of person he I remember him shouting at people uh he was falling out with the guy who was doing the X-ray uh and I could hear all this, and because I understand a bit of French, I could understand what they were saying and uh I could see what was happening the reflection in the window and at one point they were putting the pin in so it's going to be a pin through the knee down the leg to connect the two broken pieces of bone and they brought the wrong pin so he couldn't get it in, and he threw it across the room, then shouted

sort of a obscenity and the nurse had to run out and get the next pin, the right pin that was the right size and uh they had trouble getting it in and so they were banging it and you could hear the noise of the hammer hitting the pin trying to get it into the bone and it wasn't going so after a while he just gave it a big thump and it went in and that was that was uh ready to go but I couldn't feel anything I could just hear and then they finished the operation and uh then, yeah, they wheeled me out, took me uh took me back to the ward dosed me up with morphine

Mmm mm

And that was there

So quite a graphic description of Kevin's surgery there as I imagine it's not an experience that you would easily forget.

Kevin described how the surgeon was 'falling out' with the person who was doing the X-ray. In this context 'to fall out' means to have a disagreement and to be angry or upset with the person you are 'falling out' with. Another word there that might be new to you is 'thump'. The surgeon gave the pin a 'big thump' to get it in. This means to hit something very hard. For example, if you fought with your brothers and sisters when you were younger you might have given them a big thump on the arm if they were annoying you.

So the first question was about the use of the idiom 'funnily enough' and Kevin used this, Kevin used this to describe the fact that his friend he was skiing with at the time of his fall was a doctor:

so can you remember what was going through your mind at the the time of the accident when it actually happened?

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So he came and I do remember uh a woman stopping uh and I'd I remember lying there in the snow and my head was on her lap and so that uh was quite a thing, but otherwise I don't remember very much to be honest

And to have your head there on someone's lap means to rest your head on the top part of someone's legs. So that's their thighs because the lap, your lap is the surface you create with your thighs when you sit down. So this is obviously quite a close position to be in with someone you don't know, so it's a memory that stood out for him from the accident.

And question 2, why was Kevin's break more complicated than a common fracture. Kevin told us how this was because it was a spiral fracture:

and I fell and suffered a tibia and fibia fracture complicated because it was, I didn't know at the time, but it was a um a spiral frac fracture

A spiral fracture

Which apparently is a little more compli complicated than a straight break

So, a spiral fracture goes around your bone, a bit like a spiral or corkscrew shape, rather than straight across the bone, straight across the bone. This happens when a strong twisting pressure is applied, which causes the bone to break, and it's more common in longer bones such as the tibia and fibula as uh Kevin found in his experience.

So, the second half now is Kevin describing being on morphine. Morphine is a very strong painkiller medication um and a side effect of taking morphine can be hallucinations. That's another word for visions and visions of things that aren't there or things that aren't really happening. Can you hear what Kevin says he hallucinated?

The other thing we'll hear about is the further surgery and why Kevin required this after returning to the UK.

Listen for how the surgeon in England made sure he operated on the correct leg? What precautions did he take?

Ah and what do you remember about being on morphine?

Yeah, I'd never been on morphine before I again in France, I think they use a fairly pure form of anaesthetic, morphine or whatever and so I do remember in the night uh hallucinating a bit

Mmmm

I used to think I was floating on the ceiling

Mm mm

and uh you have they gave it to you at regular intervals and sometimes when you felt a bit of pain and there was quite a lot of pain at times, I would ask for the morphine and one occasion the the nurse who was on duty for the first night or two she would give me morphine in the night and one night, the third night, I woke up and I was asking for morphine and it was a different nurse and the nurse refused to give me the morphine she said I'd had too much already so I uh started screaming, asking for more morphine and they wouldn't give it to me I remember that but uh no the morphine was strange as I say, you used to have strange dreams in the night

Uh so how long were you in hospital after the operation?

After the operation I'm trying to think maybe 2-3 days, four days um and uh then I was looked after I had very good insurers

Mm mm

So they would do all the all the formalities for me got me home on the plane and taken to the airport I I don't remember much about that, but I was on the aeroplane, got picked up at the other end and came home and uh was recuperating and uh that was, yeah that was then I I do remember that um there was a lot of scarring

Ok, yeah

And over in France they use staples to close the wounds

Right, which we don't use in the UK or as I understand it not very often and what I didn't know is that the staples have to be removed and what so I don't know what I was expecting them to fall out or maybe come out

Right

But eventually they started disappearing into the flesh of my leg and sort of ingrowing until a friend of mine who is a nurse said you need to take those staples out and uh so she was a nurse, so she actually took them out I was sitting on the settee in the sitting room and uh she took the uh took the staples out for me

And how long had they been in?

Uhh, quite a long time (laughs) a weeks few weeks too long

Too long

Because they'd started disappearing

Uh so you didn't have a cast on your leg or anything, it was just?

Did I have a cast on my leg? No, not not not a plaster, no plaster no there was something, I can't remember bandages, I think

Mm bandages

And then I went to a specialist um just to see how things were going but um the specialist said that the operation wasn't working uh the bones weren't knitting together uh for some reason, and in fact the pin that had been put in there was keeping the bone apart

Right

And I needed to think of another we they needed to think of another way of doing it because obviously if the bone didn't join together well, it wouldn't work so I was referred to another specialist because they were struggling a little bit as to how they may sort it and that specialist came up with an idea which is using what they called an external fixator

Hmm mm

And even then, they said um because the operation hadn't worked, this might not work

Right

And uh it wasn't 100% and in one of the things he said to me was um you've got to be, you've got to think about this that because if it doesn't work on of the options is what we may have to amputate your leg and I remember when he said that I laughed and he said, no, you shouldn't laugh he said, cause it's a serious consideration, you should be thinking about these things

Wow

So we said, yeah, OK, we'll go for the external fixator

Gosh, did you have any idea that it wasn't going well? Was it what how was it feeling.....

No only because only because of the X-rays

OK

and it was only because the specialist in England said it isn't going well but from the outside, from what I was doing, you couldn't tell

Ok

I was still I was walking with crutches and so it was taking weight

Right

It just wasn't healing

OK, OK. So did you have to go away and think about that then?

Not really, because there wasn't really any other solution

Ok

So uh we, because I had insurance, medical insurance, we could do the operation fairly swiftly

Mmm mm

So the operation was uh uh a date was fixed

Hmm hm

I saw the specialist, the surgeon who was doing the operation, and then we're on our way

Hmm hmm um and that you were under general anaesthetic at that time?

Yeah, I knew it was gonna be general anaesthetic again, because they explain and there's quite a lot of preparation and discussion obviously they have to um be careful because they want to make sure they've told you all the possible risks and side effects and on the day of the operation, he comes in he visits you in the hospital bed and he asks you which your leg it is and you show them the leg and he gets a yellow paint spray out and he puts a big yellow arrow on the right leg so he doesn't make a mistake in the operation

Mm mm

Your wheeled down and I remember having the anaesthetic well, I didn't know it was an anaesthetic they put a tube in my arm and the anaesthetist was talking to me, then all of a sudden I don't remember anything else till I woke up

Did you have to fast before then then presumably?

Honestly can't remember probably, yeah would have, yeah, because of the general anaesthetic I would have fasted

Hmm hmm

Not eaten or what have you

So then when you came round um after that operation, can you remember how you felt?

Yeah, I came around fairly suddenly, quickly, and when I looked down and I was in the corridor of the theatre and the leg that was broken was my left leg and it was my right leg that was wrapped in sort of cotton wool and bandages

Right

And I thought they'd done the wrong leg but what had happened is because in the general anaesthetic I'd been thrashing around after they'd fixed uh the external fixator which of course is metal

Yeah

And lots of screws and bolts and what have you I'd been thrashing around with my legs and my the metal external fixator had been hitting my other leg and cutting it so what they had to do was wrap my right leg in cotton wool and sort of bandages, so that it didn't get hurt when I was uh thrashing around, but once I'd come round from, the anaesthetic it was fine I obviously knew

Yeah

And then I remember getting back to the theatre and the doctor said, would you like to have a look at what we've done?

Mmm mm

And I said, hmm, go on then because obviously it's a big deal having this big metal cage on your leg and yeah, there it was

Right, there we go. Uh so Kevin told us that he hallucinated he was floating on the ceiling:

It's important that healthcare professionals make sure patients are aware of side effects from medications such as this as they can be quite surreal and scary for the patient.

Ok, secondly, the precaution that the surgeon took to ensure he operated on the right leg was to paint a yellow arrow on it.

And when Kevin came round though Kevin all the bandages and cotton wool were actually on his uninjured leg and he told us how this was because when he was under anaesthetic, he'd been moving around so much that all the metal work and the screws and the metal of the external fixator that was needed to fix his broken leg, had been cutting the other leg. You might have heard Kevin use the verb 'to thrash'. To be thrashing around means to be moving in a violent or quite dramatic way.

Ok, so lots of good English there and I hope you find that interesting. I've never worked in orthopaedics myself, so it was really interesting for me to learn a bit more about broken bones and orthopaedic surgery.

I hope you will listen to part two of the interview to find out how it was for Kevin to have the fixator on his leg as well as when eventually he was able to have this removed.

Thank you for listening, if you have enjoyed the episode, please do rate my podcast if you are on Spotify or apple podcasts and do recommend it to other Ling, Lingsh? Other English Language students to help them with their English Language Practice and studying.

Ok, thanks a lot, take care and speak to you in the next episode, bye, bye for now, bye