

Real life story

Eye test spots brain tumour after Hugo suffers series of headaches and migraines.

When 25 year-old Hugo Fairbanks Weston, from Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk, started to get bad headaches in spring 2022 he contacted his GP, who advised him to stay hydrated and take paracetamol – but then he started to suffer blurred vision whilst he was at work.

In the days that followed, Hugo, a business agent with Christie and Co, had another bad headache which then turned into a migraine that kept him off work – this prompted him to call his local optician. His usual opticians were fully booked with no appointments available for three weeks, but Hugo was fortunate to get a cancellation with a different optical practice near his work office.

After having his eyes examined, Hugo returned to work but shortly after received a telephone call on his mobile phone – the optometrist that had conducted the eye test was suspicious about his optic nerve and wanted to carry out another scan.

After that, things progressed quickly. The optometrist suspected papilledema, which is a build-up of pressure around the optic nerve, potentially caused by a brain tumour.

Hugo said: "I was referred to the eye department at Ipswich Hospital which I went to the next day. They agreed with the optometrist that my optic nerve looked swollen and so booked me in for an MRI the following week. Looking back, it was probably a good thing that things happened so fast – I didn't have time to think or worry too much about what was happening.

"That MRI was on the Monday, I then went into hospital on the Friday and had brain surgery at Addenbrookes Hospital on the Sunday, so the process was very quick – just 12 days between the bad migraine and the surgery."

During the surgery, Hugo had a

Hugo at his graduation, shortly before diagnosis



Hugo running the London Landmarks Half Marathon with Francesca and her dad



Hugo with his girlfriend Francesca wearing eye patches after his surgery



Hugo's girlfriend is now an ambassador for The Brain Tumour Charity

shunt fitted to reduce the pressure in his brain; a biopsy confirmed he had a germinoma tumour. Hugo had good reason to be grateful to his optometrist, he was told that had he waited for an appointment he might have lost his sight.

Thankfully the surgery was successful, and Hugo began 24 sessions of radiotherapy treatment. Regular scans show that he is now tumour-free, and in July last year he got his driving license back.

He and his grateful family have since been back to visit the optometrist and gifted him a bottle of champagne as a thank you. And, working with The Brain Tumour Charity thanks to Hugo's girlfriend, Francesca, who is now a young ambassador with the charity, Hugo's keen to raise awareness of the role the teams at local high street opticians can play in a brain tumour diagnosis.

His advice to anyone experiencing similar symptoms to his? "Make that optician's appointment if something is not right with your vision. I'm very glad I did that day."