

## Tweeting makes man seek vital medical aid



Patrick Johnson, from Redruth, was diagnosed with the illness Bell's palsy by a friend on the Twitter website. She made him seek the urgent help he needed. 1007GH01705bellspalsy

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A BUSINESSMAN was spared potential permanent damage to his face when he turned to a social networking website for a diagnosis – and got one from a woman in [Scotland](#).

Patrick Johnson, of Redruth, woke up one morning with his face paralysed down one side, but rather than dialling 999 or rushing to hospital, he turned to [Twitter](#) for help.

He described his symptoms on the internet site and soon had an answer back from Marj Beattie, who runs an online secretarial service from Scotland and had previously, just by coincidence, started following his submissions, which are known as tweets.

She warned him that it sounded like Bell's palsy and urged him to get to hospital quickly.

This he did and within 40 minutes was diagnosed with the condition, which needs early treatment to prevent long-term damage.

Mr Johnson, a website and graphics designer, said: "On Tuesday morning I woke up with a partially paralysed face. I didn't notice for a few hours and by the time I did I was sat in front of my computer with a cup of coffee.

"After a quick check in the mirror and accepting insults from a friend, I posted this on Twitter: 'I feel like I've had a stroke. Half of my face doesn't work properly.'

"I thought little of it and would probably have headed to the doctor a few days later if nothing had changed. But I received this response: 'If you're truly serious, get to the doc. Bell's palsy facial symptoms mimic a stroke'."

Thanks to Ms Beattie's intervention, Mr Johnson is making a good recovery.

He said: "They say the first 72 hours are crucial in making a full recovery. Thankfully, I took Marj's advice."

Ms Beattie said: "I know about Bell's palsy as one of my friends was diagnosed with it a few years ago. He thought he had had a stroke. The left side of his face totally dropped and it was very debilitating.

"I also knew that if you caught it early enough it could be treated but, if you left it, there was a chance of permanent disfigurement. A couple of hours later, I got a message from Patrick that he had indeed been diagnosed with Bell's palsy and he wouldn't even have gone to the hospital had it not been for the info I gave him."

Bell's palsy results in the inability to control muscles on the affected side of the face.

It is characterised by facial drooping on the affected half due to malfunction of the nerve that controls the muscles.

Treatment within three days of the onset is necessary for therapy to be effective.

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