



A racing heart, sleepless nights and a sense of anxiety has always been a way of life for NBA Hall of Famer, **Jerry West**. As an NBA champion, a coach and the General Manager of the Los Angeles Lakers, stress, irritability and fatigue were things that he considered to be part of his job description.

**Jerry West**

*NBA Hall of Famer*

All his hard work paid off – Jerry West is a 14-time All Star and the all-time NBA record holder of points averaged in a playoff series. As General Manager, he led the Lakers to seven championship titles, and built the greatest Lakers teams of the past 30 years.

But when his heartbeat continued to race uncontrollably long after his playing days had ended, Mr. West realized that he was up against an entirely different type of opponent and one that required a time out from his fast-paced days on and alongside the basketball court.

West has been battling atrial fibrillation (AFib) for over 30 years and is keenly aware of what it means to live with this debilitating disease.

AFib is a heart rhythm disturbance in which the upper chambers of the heart beat in a rapid, uncoordinated and disorganized fashion, resulting in a very irregular and frequently fast heart rate. An estimated 2.5 million Americans live with AFib, which disproportionately affects individuals over 65. AFib is associated with a five-

fold increase in risk for stroke; worsens underlying cardiovascular disease; and doubles the risk of all-cause mortality. In addition to these serious health risks, many AFib patients deal with symptoms ranging from mild to severe, including fatigue, feeling weak, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain or discomfort.

**“I’d never even heard of AFib,” says Mr. West, “And I’ve always had access to the very best medical care. It’s like this condition was some sort of hidden secret that people either didn’t understand or didn’t discuss. Meanwhile, I was walking around feeling like there was a ticking time bomb in my chest.”**

As he committed himself to learning more about his condition, the symptoms continued to plague him.

“It took me a long time to understand what I was dealing with. I had to be hospitalized several times for AFib episodes, and some of them were the most painful experiences of my life,” said West. “As an athlete I’ve faced some major injuries on the court, and the pain of AFib surpasses all else.”

For years, Mr. West and his doctors worked together to find a solution to his symptoms, but management was always a challenge. Despite his lifelong commitment to a healthy diet and exercise routine, the stress of his high-profile job turned out to be a major trigger for his episodes. Frequently he was cardioverted, a procedure where the heart is converted from an abnormal heart rhythm back to a normal rhythm but the AFib kept coming back.

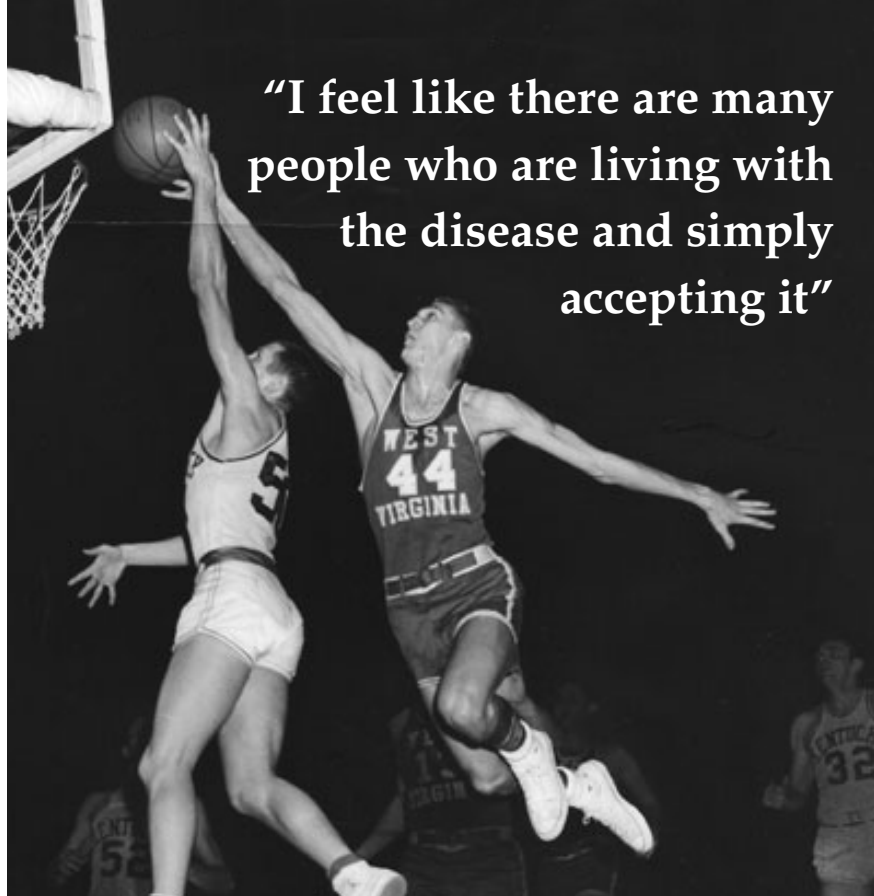
Then, less than a day after an elective procedure to treat his AFib, Mr. West experienced a complication that left him in the hospital for the next six days.

Despite his growing sense of frustration, over the next several months Mr. West dedicated himself to becoming as proactive as possible in managing his health.

**“I’ve always been active and in control,” he says. “I cannot imagine life after suffering a stroke. My biggest fear is to no longer be physically viable and become a burden on my family. That’s a huge motivator in how thoroughly I research and manage my AFib.”**

Working closely with his doctor and educating himself about AFib, he gradually got better control over the disease. That meant making a number of difficult lifestyle decisions, including leaving NBA life.

Nonetheless, Mr. West continues to encourage other patients with AFib not to settle for less when it comes to their disease.



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“You have to be a responsible patient,” West advises. “I feel like there are many people who are living with the disease and simply accepting it. That’s not good enough. You have to invest time in learning everything you can about managing AFib. You have to develop a relationship with your doctor and be willing to ask hard questions and make the lifestyle changes your body needs.”

“But no matter what, you can’t give up on yourself,” concludes West. ■