It all started when I was 14. I was sick with a virus and went to the doctor who told me to drink lots of fluids. My mum had three two-litre bottles of cordial concentrate in the kitchen. Once I was well enough to get out of bed, I started drinking them, diluted with water. I remember feeling extremely thirsty and thought it was just a normal part of being sick. However, when I was 16, I was admitted to hospital with a high blood sugar level. Someone suggested that I may have diabetes.

When I was 16, I eventually mentioned to my doctor that I was drinking lots of fluids, and he immediately diagnosed me with type 1 diabetes. I was shocked and scared. I had always lived a healthy lifestyle with my Cypriot upbringing and a good, healthy diet. I never thought I would have to inject insulin every day. The thought of needles was so terrifying, and I was just a teenager!

I didn't want to have needles every day, and I didn't want to share with my school friends that I had diabetes. I thought of my school friend who had diabetes and had to have needles everyday. I was terrified of needles and just couldn't bear the thought of it.

After my initial insulin injection, I felt my energy levels come back straight away, and I thought I was back to normal. I continued to live a healthy lifestyle, eating lots of veggies, pulses, and the occasional piece of meat. I felt good, happy, and healthy. I wasn't aware that I was diabetic, and I didn't realize the long-term health risks of diabetes.

Antigone's Story
and my family, and friends could instantly see a difference in my complexion.

The first nine years of having diabetes was badly mismanaged. There was no consistency and I was just going to outpatient's clinics at different hospitals – wherever I was living at the time. It got to the stage that I was going unconscious at night because of the high levels of insulin I was taking. My blood sugar had dipped so low that I was having really bad hypos overnight for a week or two. It was then that I remembered being told about Dr. Matt Cohen at Baker IDI (then Royal Southern Memorial Hospital), so I called him. He sorted out my insulin and brought a level of control to my diabetes that I'd never had.

About a year later I started experiencing really horrible bouts of nausea and vomiting once every 2-3 weeks. I'd seen a few doctors who would treat the symptoms but the episodes continued. During one of my visits with Dr. Cohen, he asked me "Is there anything else? Anything at all?" to which I responded that I'd like to lose a bit of weight around my stomach. Dr. Cohen had a feel and found a mass. He booked me in for an ultrasound and they saw what looked like a cyst or a fibroid. I had an operation and awoke to being told that my ovaries and uterus had been removed and in the next few days, after test results, they found I had ovarian cancer. I went on to a light dose of chemotherapy which thankfully, along with the surgery, did the job. The cancer no longer existed and I've been cancer-free ever since.

When I was initially diagnosed with diabetes, doctors knew little about the causes and it wasn't until years later that they agreed that there could well be a link between my virus at 14 and my diabetes. Whilst it's never been mentioned by doctors, I wonder if my ovarian cancer had any link to my diabetes.

The experience of having diabetes has been horrendous and in the past I have come to the conclusion that there is a link between my cancer and diabetes, I hope that with advancements in medical research doctors will improve the lives of those living with diabetes. Professor Magliano's research will help give diabetes patients a better understanding of what diabetes is and what will happen if they don't change their lifestyles and assist doctors to prevent associated diseases.

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