

Health check

Fully aware he is no longer a perfect Greek Adonis figure and with niggling doubts about his health, Dr Hamayun Ahmed, our publisher, visited Preventicum - a luxury clinic which offers state-of-the-art full-body MOTs



Isn't it surprising how middle age creeps up on you? Such a short leap from being that financially challenged but enthusiastic go getting 20 something year old, to a 47 year old stressed, overweight, and Middle aged seen it all cynic. That perfect Greek Adonis figure of my youth (real or perceived) has been transformed to something out of a Dr Who Creatures convention. Let's face it, I've looked at the photo of me walking on the beach with my 3 year old and think "that isn't me" - several chins, no chest and a belly that runs with a large convex curvature down to my legs. So I'm obese. Take comfort, so are most of my friends and colleagues of my age. They all successfully manage highly stressed occupations and demanding families. There's bound to be nothing wrong - anyway we all know someone rich, skinny and extremely fit who died jogging?! Yet the aches and pains, the backaches, the coffee jump starts in the morning identify with that constant lingering thought - recognised but ignored - "must book myself in for a full medical". It's not just about the time, it is probably more the totally irrational fear of discovering that something may not quite be right....

So when the nice people at Preventicum, based in the heart of London, offered the opportunity to have a complete, thorough state of the art health screening, there really was no-one else in the office more suited than me to be its recipient.

The welcome pack containing the itinerary for the day was received promptly - an initial cursory glance and efficiently filed (or lost in the melee on my desk). The screening was weeks away, and anyway I could always complete the medical questionnaire on my way down to London. I had a conversation with the nice lady from Preventicum several days before to ask if I wanted to undertake the whole process within the MRI scan - just to check for polyps in the colon. Yes, of course I replied - not really knowing what that meant. Although polyps....colon.... hmm...better read the literature.

The pickup from the station in a chauffeur driven limousine compensated somewhat for having fasted for the last 48 hours and the taking of medication designed to cleanse the system. Once there, the facilities are modern with your own air conditioned room, telephone, internet access and flat screen TV - an ideal resting place between the battery of tests performed over a six hour period.

After the routine blood and urine tests, there is a full medical consultation with the Medical Director, on medical history and lifestyle habits. An extensive ultrasound examination of the major organs looking also for blockages in major arteries is followed by a full body MRI scan. The only downside of this is being cooped up in a cylindrical tube for almost an hour and a half - but what the results manage to show certainly make for up for the minimal discomfort. Eye and audio examinations are followed by an ECG, stress test and spirometry - to further analyse the condition of the heart and lungs.

In reality, the tests used for examination would probably be utilised in other health screening programmes. The major difference here is that not many have access to a top of the range 1.5 Tesla Philips Scanner to obtain the full body MRI scan and offer the results collated on the day giving a 'virtual tour' - showing a full body scan with expert analysis of the condition of your arterial system and all of the major organs including the brain, heart, and kidneys. You even get a CD of the images sent to you along with a full report and any recommendations.

The real advantage is that there is expertise on hand to immediately analyse and personally discuss the findings of the various procedures highlighting any problems and more importantly, screening for potential life threatening diseases such as bowel cancer, brain aneurisms, tumours, heart problems, evidence of old trauma, through for instance, silent heart attacks, diabetes and clogged arteries leading to high blood pressure. Bowel cancer affects 34,000 people a year. This disease is often known as the silent killer and generally when cancer is detected in the colon it's often to late. It is wholly curable if detected early enough and the virtual colonoscopy as part of the MRI scan may be able to detect any pre cancerous polyps in the bowel. Treatment at this stage generally leads to a 100% success rate in combating the disease.

So, is it worth it? How can a value be placed on health? If you are middle aged and lead a full hectic lifestyle having worked to achieve so many positives in life, if you are used to and able to afford the best, then this quality screening of the highest level is an absolute must at least once every two years - and worth every penny.

For more information please see: www.preventicum.co.uk