

pressure arm band and started pumping away. Strangely enough, he told me my blood pressure was sky high (why hadn't I noticed any symptoms?).

He seemed quite annoyed with all this and promptly left the room - probably moving on to the next "victim". The good news is, the nurse did manage to find a suitable vein and the required amount of blood was withdrawn.

I was escorted back to reception by Nurse Ratchett where I was told to go outside and walk around for 30 minutes to get my blood pressure down. I can do that, I thought, but just as I was leaving the building I was called back to be asked – "are you diabetic?" No, I said, quite taken aback. "Well, your urine has sugar – we need another sample" So, off I trot to the unisex loo again and do the necessary.

So there I was, on the streets of London, hypertensive, diabetic and with collapsed veins, trying to calm myself enough to get a decent BP reading!!

After 30 minutes and 3 cups of tea, I made my way back to the "House of Horrors". I was immediately put into a small office and the nurse strapped me in again. No, no good, still sky high!! The look on her face seemed to say "how is this woman still walking around!!"

So, I was then despatched to get a chest X-ray. Out of the building, turn right, keep going, cross over and into another building. Once there I was escorted down into a basement. I spotted the cubicles straight away and was handed a white gown to put on – "top half only" Nurse Ratchett's sister barked at me.

Have you seen these gowns? I poked my head out of the less than efficient curtain of the cubicle and dared to ask "Do you have a larger size please? I think I knew the answer before I asked, but like Oliver Twist, I thought I might as well give it a try. "No we don't – please hurry up" was the answer.



So, there I was clutching the two sides of this little white gown, stretching it to cover my ample bosom (and failing). Have you heard the expression "hurry up and wait?" I waited 15 minutes perched on a stool, keeping my balance with one hand while desperately still trying to retain what little shred of dignity I had left, with my other hand.

So, X-ray done and results in hand I set off back to the clinic. I had my blood pressure taken as soon as I walked in the door – you guessed it – still sky high! The good news is, my urine was now apparently sugar free – it was the Mars Bar that was hiding there before!

I was then told to go to my own doctor and get my BP read. I did and it was normal (as it had been all my adult life by the way). So, not in fact, hypertensive and not diabetic.

A couple of days later I was collecting my dog from quarantine as her confinement was up and I was looking forward to her being with me again, when my mobile rang – it was Dr. Patel. "Are you an alcoholic" he asked me. Stunned, I said "No, I am not" in a very indignant voice. "Well your liver enzymes are up, do you drink a lot of alcohol" "No, I do not". Again, I was told to go back to my doctor for retesting after waiting a week. I did this and had to wait another week for the results. That was a very long two weeks and by the end of it I had convinced myself I would need a liver transplant at the very least! Would I ever get to Riyadh? The enzymes were now down because I had finished a course of medication (why didn't they ask me this in London - aaaagh!)

So, my visa medical was signed and I finally got my visa. My dog and I arrived in Riyadh happy in the fact that I am NOT diabetic, NOT hypertensive and NOT an alcoholic.

Ladies, don't be put off, as I am happy to say that my last visa medical in Manchester was very professional, not at all traumatic and had nice flowered gowns that even wrapped over. But that doesn't make entertaining reading!!

