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Fethard's Paul named as one of faces of MS

Tipperary man Paul Tierney, with my family in Tipperary. the Chairman of the South Tipperary MS Ireland Branch, was one of the people chosen to be the "faces" for MS Ireland's World MS Day campaign, which was held this week.

The theme of the Faces of MS exhibition featuring Fethard's Paul Tierney in St Stephen's Green Centre in Dublin in partnership with Novartis was to highlight and challenge the perceptions of what people living with MS look like and are capable of.

My story is a bit different to most or all. I began experiencing groin/hip problems and was referred by my GP to Whitfield where I underwent surgery. "Soon after, I underwent a balance test and the surgeon wasn't satisfied with my balance and coordination. They referred me to a neurologist in Dublin. "Soon after, I was given the news that I had MS. I remember being asked if I had heard of MS before. I said: 'No'.

After receiving the news, I remember feeling numb. I was unaccepting of the MS diagnosis and hid it from my friends for some time.

Once I did accept it and shared news of my diagnosis with friends it weirdly felt like a massive relief. It removed the strain and energy I was using up hiding awareness and support the diagnosis.

One challenge I have faced is having to adapt my common sporting life. I miss playing neurological condition and competing in rugby and affecting young adults in GAA.

However, I have found alternatives like volunteering at Parkruns and coaching yoga - something I never would have done before. When I think back, I realise the inner strength I had. My advice to those diagnosed is not to dwell and try to stay as positive as possible. I have found the different family support and new people I have met due to MS a bonus.

From those I have met in south Tipperary to those I have met in the national MS Care Centre in Bushy Park and further afield, I have enjoyed getting to know new people and that has been a benefit in my view."

The aim of the exhibition was to showcase a range of experiences so people would better understand that MS was a very individual condition.

Describing his MS diagnosis, Paul said: "I was diagnosed with MS in 2013 at the age of 21. I live on a farm

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Fethard's Paul Tierney, Chair of the South Tipperary MS Ireland Branch, exercising on a rowing machine