

Colin's Story

Treating Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) with neurostimulation

The following story tells the experience of one person who is receiving neurostimulation for the treatment of complex regional pain syndromes. As you read it, please bear in mind that the experience is specific to this particular person. Results vary, not every response is the same. (Not all treatment options are applicable to your type of pain.)

When just turning 60 year's of age, Colin felt in the prime of his life. He travelled regularly as a technical sales representative and was a keen walker and gardener. Then, while on an international business trip to Austria, pain struck in the right knee and lower back. Two years down the line after a succession of unsuccessful diagnoses, heavy medication and treatments – Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) was diagnosed and a Medtronic Neurostimulator implanted. A transformation occurred, crutches were put aside, medication reduced and a more active lifestyle resumed. This is Colin's story.

Colin had no idea what triggered the pain on his trip, but it was severe enough for him to seek the immediate advice of a local Austrian GP. He administered a pain killing injection, but the numb feeling in the knee and lower back would not go away. Back in the UK, innumerable visits to consultants and tests followed.

The first diagnosis by Colin's GP was a slipped disc. This view was supported by a Neurosurgeon whom subject to confirmation of the diagnosis by an MRI scan was recommending an immediate operation. However, the MRI scan proved inconclusive and the Neurosurgeon just was not sure what was 'going on'. Then followed X-Rays, Bone density scans, Blood tests, a bone biopsy, Bone marrow, Nerve conduction tests, Nerve root injections, Vascular and Doppler studies, CT scan, another MRI scan and more X-Rays. Each new Physician requested new tests, and each one had a different diagnosis, from a vertebrae condition called Scheuermanns Osteochondritis – to a form of cancer.

The whole process was proving quite an ordeal. Throughout this period the only way Colin could walk was with the aid of crutches. Colin's medication level was also very high and variable, greatly limiting his renowned 'get up and go' zest for life.

Light at the end of the tunnel came when a Consultant in pain management said, "I cannot do anything else for you but I know a man who can" – he was referring to a Dr Simon Thomson. Dr Thomson, explained the proposed treatment and success rates to Colin's Medical Insurers to secure funding for the procedure.

The Medtronic neurostimulation system was implanted within days. The lead (a special insulated medical wire) was placed near the spinal cord and connected to a battery operated implantable neurostimulator. The lead delivers the impulses to 'block' pain

messages on their way to the brain. So instead of pain, the patient feels a tingling sensation (called paresthesia).

For Colin, the transformation was positively dramatic, “The day after the operation, I walked out of the hospital without the crutches. In the week that followed I only took two analgesic tablets, instead of my usual weekly 70 and I was soon on the move again, building up my daily walks in distance and duration.

Approaching a year on from the procedures, Colin steadily increased muscle power and stamina, to “While returning to work may be beyond my reach, I am back gardening and walking regularly. The progress I have made hit home when a friend told me he was convinced I had ‘visited Lourdes’ – the transformation and return to near pain free, active life has been great.”