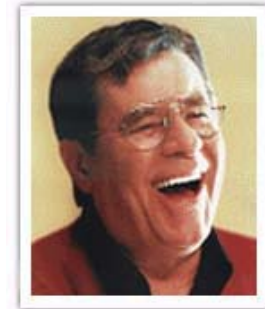


Jerry's story

The following article tells the story of one patient who is receiving neurostimulation for the treatment of pain. www.tamethepain.co.uk invited this patient to share his story candidly. As you read it, please bear in mind that the experiences are specific to this particular patient. Results vary; not every response is the same.



A life giving joy, a life in pain

"I had pain every day for 37 years," says renowned entertainer Jerry Lewis. "The pain was under everything - the telethons, the concerts, the appearances. When I was on stage, the adrenaline was overpowering. But after I took the last bow, I had to be helped to the dressing room. The pain was that severe."

Now 76 years old, Jerry Lewis spent a lifetime making us laugh at his bumbling pratfalls and goofy pranks. (He performed most of his own stunts.) We especially loved the physical comedy for which he was so famous. Unfortunately, he paid dearly for it.

In 1965, after 65 movies, all the damage Jerry had done to his body over the years culminated in a crash landing onto a steel cable, chipping his spine. "I knew I did something that day because I felt total paralysis from my waist down," he remembers.

No hope on the horizon?

For decades, Jerry visited one doctor after another all over the world, trying to find relief for his severe pain. Pain medications were ineffective or caused uncomfortable side effects such as nausea and sleepiness. Injections of medication in his spine lost their effectiveness. "Doctors told me I just had to live with the pain," says Jerry. "I heard that so many times, but I could not accept it." Jerry turned to narcotics for relief, and for 13 years he was addicted to oxycodone and aspirin.

While Jerry never stopped working - especially doing his charity work - daily life grew more and more difficult for him. In addition to consulting with numerous doctors, Jerry visited spas and massage therapists, any professional who could possibly provide pain relief. Nothing helped for more than a short period of time.

In 1997, Jerry's orthopaedic surgeon recommended pain specialist/anaesthetist Joseph Schifini, MD. Injections of pain medication in Jerry's hip and back initially worked well, but then they started losing their effectiveness. Dr. Schifini next prescribed various pain medications. These were slightly effective for pain relief, but caused gastrointestinal upset, nausea, and sedation. Back surgery (a laminectomy) gave Jerry some pain relief, but only for about six weeks.

Endless suffering

Pain still tormented Jerry day and night. By February 2002, he was unable to walk more than a few steps and his sleep was disrupted. "I had every shot, every dimension of pain management," he says.

Jerry also contracted a lung disease, and his pain made movement difficult, which hampered recovery from the lung ailment.

"There is another danger to chronic pain: despair," says Jerry. "Despair rides along with chronic pain like a partner." Jerry reached a point when he contemplated suicide. "I was ready to walk into an 18-wheeler or a fan jet or blow my brains out," he says. "I didn't think I'd make it another day."

Dr. Schifini and Jerry had several discussions about Jerry's aggravating pain. "Jerry was getting to the point where nothing was working for him," said Dr. Schifini. "The next logical step seemed to be neurostimulation."

Neurostimulation (pain pacemaker)

Neurostimulation is a therapy that delivers precisely controlled, low-voltage electrical stimulation to the spinal cord through a carefully placed insulated medical wire called a "lead." The lead is connected to an implantable pulse generator that contains a battery and electronics. The stimulation blocks pain messages from reaching the brain. Instead of pain, the patient feels a "tingling" sensation.

There are two types of neurostimulation systems: a fully implantable system and an externally powered system. Both are sometimes referred to as pain pacemakers.

All parts of the fully implantable system are placed beneath the skin and unnoticeable to most people. The system includes an external programmer that enables patients to fine-tune their therapy. Stimulation can be increased or decreased as needed to provide optimal pain relief. The externally powered neurostimulation system uses a battery source that is worn outside the body, as well as an implanted receiver and lead.

One-hundred percent relief

In mid-April, 2002, Jerry underwent a "trial" with neurostimulation so Dr. Schifini could determine if this therapy was right for him. The procedure consisted of placing a temporary neurostimulation lead in Jerry's mid-spinal area. The lead was attached to a temporary external neurostimulator, which was secured to his side. The trial was a success. "He had 100 percent cent pain relief," says Dr. Schifini. Mild stimulation was delivered through the leads for a four-day trial period, which was spent at home. "Jerry called me every day to tell me he wanted a permanent system," recalls Dr. Schifini.

On April 20th Jerry Lewis had a permanent neurostimulation system implanted by a surgeon. The procedure was similar to the neurostimulation trial, only this time doctors implanted the entire system - including the neurostimulator - beneath Jerry's skin (near his abdomen). Jerry takes no other pain medication and has suffered no side effects, but side effects are possible. Because the system is surgically placed, risks of infections do exist. Device complications, such as lead displacement causing an interruption in pain relief, also exist.

"On the day of the implant, I told my housekeeper four times that I had no pain!" says Jerry joyously. "I was reborn. That's the best way to put it. I get up every morning and say, 'Thank God; I open my eyes without pain.'"

"Before the implant, Jerry was unable to participate in physical therapy or any activities with his family," says Dr. Schifini. Jerry has returned to physical therapy and rehabilitation, and he's better able to tolerate activities of daily living. "Because he's not having pain, he can focus much better on his other medical condition, which is getting his lungs better," says Dr. Schifini. "If he didn't have lung problems, he'd be the Jerry Lewis everybody remembers."

What did Jerry do after the implant? Fly to New York? Paris? "I made sand castles on the beach with my daughter," declares Jerry contentedly.

Jerry now has many memories to create and re-create, especially with his 10-year-old daughter, Danielle (Dani). For many years, she would run from the school bus to the front door and Jerry would scoop her up into the air and cheer. His brutal pain had put a stop to this tradition.

After the implant, Jerry called Dani to tell her that the surgery was a success. She said, "Then you can pick me up now!" When he returned home, Jerry stood in the driveway while Dani raced up to him and he gathered her in his arms. "There wasn't a dry eye in the neighborhood," says Jerry. "I mean it when I say, 'This neurostimulator is my umbilical cord to a new life.'"