

Brachial Plexus Injury Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring Edition of the Brachial Plexus Injury Newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading it and would love to hear your comments and views. Any contributions that you would like to make to the newsletter would be most welcome. We will send this newsletter out as hard copy to your postal address but if you wish to receive it in electronic form then please inform Beverley with your e-mail address.

What's going on in this edition ?

- E-Link for BPI Service
- Update on recent research
- Return to work success story
- Beat tension with relaxation techniques
- Disability Employment Advisors
- Handy gadget explored
- New babies - (photo!)
- Useful websites

E-Link for BPI Service

During 2007, Leslie Wallace, OT Hand Specialist at the National Spinal Injuries Unit (QENSIU) based at the Southern General, introduced the Brachial Plexus service to the use of the Biometrics Ltd.E-Link.

The E-Link is a comprehensive computerised evaluation and exercise system. It connects to the computer via a USB port and is based on modular systems, namely evaluation, database and exercise. The evaluation system based in the QENSIU comprises of grip strength, pinch force, range of movement and myo-electric readings. The database system is where patient records, progress reports, graphs and tables are stored. The exercise system comprises of a variety of handle attachments used to work on functional hand grips. It is also possible to use the evaluation tools (the dynamometer, pinch meter and myo-electric attachment) for exercise programmes. Each of the handles/attachments are used like a joystick to control playing a variety of simple graphic games making it a fun way to exercise. We have been using the E-Link successfully with specific cases to assist detecting positive muscle responses following Brachial Plexus Injury to confirm nerve recovery either post operatively or through natural post traumatic recovery.

Continues on page 4

Contact the News Team

Beverley Wellington
Clinical Nurse Specialist in Orthopaedics
Victoria Infirmary, Langside, Glasgow, G42 9TY
or email Beverley.Wellington@gvic.scot.nhs.uk

Return to work for BPI patient

One of our patients, Ricky Inglis, who returned to his work on the Isle of Skye is shown here laying the final stones in a wall that he helped to build and we also see his handywork in the nearly completed cottage that he was also involved in.



Relaxation exercises

Relaxing can be difficult when life is stressful. Try these simple exercises to help you beat tension and improve your ability to relax completely.

Breathe in deeply through your nose, completely filling up your lungs then let the breath out slowly through your mouth. Imagine bringing calm positive air in to your lungs as you breathe in and imagine releasing any angry, anxious or stressful feelings as you breathe out. Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase as you practice this breathing.

It may help to try and visualise a relaxing experience or place such as lying on a beach, floating in a pool, flying above the clouds.

To slowly exercise a stretch on the muscles and release tension, first sit in a comfortable chair or lie down. Picture all the tension being released and finally leaving your body as you do these exercises (combined with the breathing exercises) for 5 seconds each exercise.

Start at your head and tense facial muscles by clenching your teeth and frowning hard, hold for 5 seconds then release the tension.

Shrug your shoulders up (if you can) and tuck in your chin hard against your chest for 5 seconds then release and circle your neck around.

Make fists (if you can) and tense your arm muscles for 5 seconds before releasing and shaking off the tension.

Move down to the buttocks and clench the muscles firmly for 5 seconds then release. Next tighten up the quads muscles at the front of the thighs, straightening the knee firmly, (be careful you don't cramp) and release after 5 seconds.

Winding down

Lastly pull up your feet and toes towards your shins and hold for 5 seconds then release and let all the tension escape from your body at this time.

Finish by again breathing in deeply through your nose, completely filling up your lungs then let the breath out slowly through your mouth. Imagine bringing calm positive air in to your lungs as you breathe in and imagine releasing any angry, anxious or stressful feelings as you breathe out. Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase as you practice this breathing.

Brief update on recent research

As many of you may be aware I was finishing an MSc last year and had undertaken research with some of you. This is a brief report on how it all went. First of all I have to say a huge thank you to the 5 patients who agreed to participate – you know who you are! I am so grateful for the time you gave me and the honesty of your contributions that enabled me to complete a worthy piece of research. I was looking at the quality of life that is experienced by you following a traumatic brachial plexus injury. After going through a conversational interview that was audio taped and loosely explored some themes I then had the arduous task of listening and transcribing the conversation word for word. Not an easy task for an English girl to pick out your dialects and phrases! Once the information was pulled together I then analysed it and identified similar themes. These were then categorised. There were 3 interesting categories that did not immediately relate to the research:

- Concerning the mechanism of injury (how it happened) and any other injuries sustained
- Whether early surgery was done or if there was later stage secondary operations
- Future goals and plans

The 4 main categories to come out were:

1. Employment (past, present, future)
2. Experiences of pain
3. Body image, self worth and relationships outside immediate partner
4. Sexuality, emotions and relationships with partners

There was some very interesting information gleaned from the research that will assist us as a team to provide improved quality of care to future patients of the service.

The actual findings are detailed in my dissertation which I am presenting at conferences this year and will hopefully also be available for publication.. If you wish to discuss any aspects of the research then please contact me.

Beverley

The role of the Disability Employment Advisor

The Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) is a specialist advisor that can help you plan the best way for you to find work. The DEA is located at your local Job Centre Plus.

If you have a disability or health issue you can arrange to meet with a DEA voluntarily.

If you are already working, the DEA can give you and your employer advice regarding practical ways to help you keep your job.

If you are currently unable to work, the DEA can give advice on financial and practical support you may be able to get and refer to other local organisations that can offer appropriate services.

The DEA can do the following:

- Give you an employment assessment to identify your abilities and strengths.
- Provide job matching and referral service.
- Provide a support programme run by employment specialists (New Deal for Disabled People).
- Provide access to training to update your skills or gain new ones.

To contact a DEA you can log on to:
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

or contact your local Job Centre using the telephone directory.

Baby News



Proud dad Alistair with twins Megan and Mya

We are delighted to announce the early arrival of twin girls to one of our patients and his partner. Here you can see the proud father, Alistair Inglis with Megan who was born on the 7th of January weighing 3lb 4oz and Mya who was born on the 8th of January weighing 3lb 10oz.

Congratulations to the happy parents from all of the BPI team.

Continued from page 1

The myo-electric attachment has been particularly useful in detecting muscle contractions and for building up muscle where the myo-electric connector linked to the computer provides visual feedback and evidence of muscle contraction to both the patient and the therapist. It uses people's natural instincts to try and win and distracts them from the simple action required to build up specific relevant muscles.

Handy gadget

Several of our patients have said that their injured hand becomes very cold during the winter season. A search on the internet found battery operated heated gloves. The glove runs on a "D" size alkaline battery which lasts 4-6 hours if used continuously. The glove is designed to keep the hand and fingers warm, making it more comfortable to be out in the cold weather.

One example is the Lectra Battery Heated Glove which was found on:

www.livingaidsonline.co.uk

Please ensure that you have shopped around and looked at several products before making a purchase. If you have anything that you would like to share e.g. adaptations or products that have been useful in helping regain independence or improving your lifestyle and, please contact me: Debbie Clyde, Occupational Therapist or the News Team

BPI Service Website

We are pleased to say that our website is developing nicely and is worth a visit if you've not been on for a while. You can access the patient information booklet and also past copies of the newsletters. Let us know your thoughts on our page as we are keen to develop further and welcome your comments and suggestions!

Visit us at:

www.brachialplexus.scot.nhs.uk