

‘How I got my life back’

Years of severe back pain forced Margaret Vernalls to become practically housebound. Until she discovered a new non-surgical treatment...

By Katharine Wootton

As an NHS nurse for more than 30 years, Margaret Vernalls, 67, dedicated her life to helping relieve other people’s pain. So when she started to feel niggles in her own back she didn’t pay it much attention and instead trooped on, looking out for her patients.

Not long after, Margaret’s life was turned upside down when her husband, Dave, was devastatingly diagnosed with terminal cancer. As her nurse’s instinct kicked in, Margaret temporarily put her own pain to one side as she tended to Dave, who sadly passed away in November 2010.

It was in the time following his death that Margaret realised that the pain she’d been ignoring had been steadily getting worse. And after a knee replacement the pain in her lower back became unbearable, especially when she also started to suffer with bouts of sciatica (shooting pains down her legs).

“Every time I stood up, the bottom of my back would go into spasm. And when I started

‘I realised the pain I had been ignoring was getting steadily worse’ →



◀ walking, the pain would become overwhelming. I'd start sweating and feel like I couldn't go any further. Just standing at the sink to wash up and dressing myself became a problem, too," she says.

"I got to a point where I couldn't go anywhere without a stick and even then, I'd have to stop every few yards to lean on my stick and wait for the spasm to go.

"As the pain wasn't as bad when I sat down, I tended to keep sitting all the time. I pretty much stopped going out and the poor dog barely got a walk at all; I just didn't want to do anything. Even trips out in a car with friends became impossible as my sciatica would drive me mad when I was sat in the same position for a long journey.

"The doctors tried sending me for physiotherapy and acupuncture and referred me to a chiropractor, but nothing seemed to make a difference.

"I eventually had an MRI scan, which showed I had bulges in the discs in my back and a few of them near the bottom were completely crushed."

It was then that Margaret spotted an advert in her local newspaper for a non-invasive treatment, called IDD Therapy, that eases pressure on the discs in the spine using a special machine. And with nothing to lose, she decided to give it a go.

"When I had my first treatment I was nervous because it is quite a big machine but the osteopath, Mark, reassured me that it's quite safe. You stand against the table while it's vertical and the machine slowly lowers into a horizontal position. I lay there for about 25 minutes while the machine whirred into action and I could feel a slow 'ripple' in my spine. It's so gentle, and I got to quite enjoy the sound of the machine as I found it very soothing – so much so that I'd often nod off!

"I could definitely feel the

'I got to the point where I couldn't go anywhere

treatment working even after the first session; my back felt looser and I could move a bit better and the treatment wasn't painful at all – it was more like an 'aah, that's better' feeling.

"I knew I'd found something that could work. I went on to to have about 18 treatments, four times a week at first and then less so as I went on.

"Once my programme was finished I no longer had to use a stick and life was incredibly different to before. I could go back to doing everyday little things, like taking a walk or doing the housework.

"It's now two years on since I had the treatment and so far, my back has been pain-free. Nowadays I'm always out and about and have been on



holidays to London, Lanzarote and America, which I never would have contemplated two years ago.

"I've also rediscovered my old love of swimming and am planning on moving house soon – something I couldn't physically have done before the treatment.

"It's honestly been a godsend and has given me back my life."

What is IDD Therapy?

IDD Therapy (which stands for Intervertebral Differential Dynamics) is a non-invasive treatment which uses computer-controlled pulling forces to gently draw apart specific spinal segments where discs have herniated, bulged or 'slipped'. By relieving pressure on certain discs, it coaxes them back into place and releases any trapped nerves, preventing muscle spasms.

If this brings to mind images of Sean Connery's James Bond being stretched out on the traction table you wouldn't be a million miles away. While IDD Therapy is based on the traditional traction technique that was popular in



the Nineties, this high-tech treatment is much more precise and effective as it targets specific problem areas of the spine.

IDD Therapy is available in 25 clinics around the UK for £60 -£75 per session. To find your nearest IDD Therapy Spine Centre, call Steadfast Clinics on 0345 625 2566 or visit www.IDDTherapy.co.uk