

## **MY ACL RUPTURE EXPERIENCE**

I was 36 years of age when I completely ruptured my ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) in my right knee whilst playing squash. I had already been under the 'care' of the NHS for 5 months and was not progressing at all, only receiving one half hour session of physiotherapy a week and being told to go home and carry out my exercises every hour through each day. There was no light at the end of the tunnel.

To complicate matters even further for me unfortunately I had been placed into a hinged leg brace which was locked incorrectly by the NHS doctor which caused me a significant amount of additional problems on, not only my right knee but my whole leg. I had been left in that position for a period of two months and then only received limited physiotherapy once a week. I was at the end of my tether through the pain, lack of help and was due back to work as I had been off already for 5 months and with mortgage and bills etc to pay time was not on my side. Not only that I was still on crutches and I just knew that the treatment I was receiving was not right or good enough for someone in my position.

I decided I needed to do something about the state I was in.

I was unable to move my leg at all it was just 'hanging' at a 40 degree angle. There was not even a millimetre of movement where it had seized up so much and I had no thigh or calf muscles anymore where they had just withered away through lack of use. Being able to fully bend my leg and to ever straighten my leg let alone hyper flex it seemed completely and utterly impossible. I never thought I would be able to walk properly again due to the damage that had been caused. It was time to take action.

I did a lot of research online. Believe me I had the time to thoroughly examine the internet as I had been laid up for 5 months. I spent about a whole week reading profiles of orthopaedic consultants, researching their previous medical experience, the qualifications of each consultant, and not as importantly but important enough because of travelling on crutches, where they were based.

To be honest I whittled it down to three and I chose Mr McDermott overall because of his Professor status, the lectures that he has and continues to do, he writes papers on different orthopaedic procedures and his experience is second to none. I could not have chosen a better surgeon or have been any happier.

I went along to see Mr McDermott and basically presented to him myself as a patient who had arthrofibrosis, a very stiff knee that needed a further arthroscopic arthrolysis and MUA (Manipulation under Anaesthetic), followed by inpatient physiotherapy and the use of a CPM (Continuous Passive Motion) machine, and all followed by intensive outpatient physiotherapy.

Mr McDermott examined my knee. He could see that it was in desperate need of manipulation and that a further arthroscopy would be required. He arranged for an MRI scan so he could see exactly what he was facing and within two weeks I was booked into London Bridge hospital for the procedures.

I will not lie, it was painful before I saw him and afterwards but after his arthroscopy and MUA it felt 'lighter' inside. Being able to actually move it at last was, to me at that time a miracle in itself. I had been in pain since the October and was seen by Mr McDermott the following March. My knee had serious swelling, scar tissue and was locked tight itself at an angle from being left in the hinged leg brace for so long incorrectly.

I have a pretty strong pain threshold and I think this coupled with the sheer determination of wanting to get back on my (two) feet I worked extremely hard on my physiotherapy both at the private hospital and upon my return home. I had my first session the same afternoon as my operation. The physiotherapist was very nice and friendly but firm and hard on me which is what my knee needed. The exercises were painful but you know the saying – “no pain no gain”. We did a lot of various exercises. I also used a theraband, a CPM machine and iced my knee whilst in the private hospital and continued to do this on my return home. (The food was also very good at the hospital and the care of the nurses was wonderful!)

I was sent home two nights early which I have to mention here, shows that they do not keep you in as a ‘money maker’ unnecessarily they actually care about you as a person and your progress. They felt that I was ready to go home early because of how I had progressed even so close to the surgery and I then found a sports therapist who was local to where I lived.

I visited my sports therapist and we did 2 months of vigorous rehabilitation three times a week with me doing exercises at home also before moving onto static knee exercises. We then finally managed to get my visits down to a couple of times a week, then a couple of times a month. We are now at once a year but I still do my quads exercises but can actually train now and do my sporting activities again also.

It is now nearly 3 years since my accident. I had a lot of exercises to do at home initially when I left Mr McDermott and I carried this out religiously and they did get easier each day. Yes, I did have moments of “oh no it hurts, I can’t do this anymore” but I knew only I could make the difference to how my leg would be in the future and believe me, you get out what hard work you put in. I knew there was light at the end of the tunnel and it certainly did pay off.

Additionally I hired a CPM machine for my own use at home initially and I do think it did help for the first few days as it keeps the knee joint moving. That along with the exercises ended up with the result I now have: I am not facing further knee operations or reconstruction as I have built the quadriceps up and my calf muscle, also muscles I didn’t even know I had (!) from sheer hard work. I now have a right leg nearly as good as the left one. I can even hyper flex my leg now. This did take a very long time but I am pleased to say I am there finally.

I know for certain that if I was unfortunate enough to do the same again with my other knee I would contact Mr McDermott straight away. There are no waiting times, he listens, and he will speak with you in layman’s terms. No confusing medical terminology etc. He even draws little pictures for you! He advises you until the night draws in (in a good way!) and does not even expect you to choose him in the end. He does not push for your business. I would recommend him to anyone.

Just over two years on from first meeting with Mr McDermott if I do have any questions or concerns I will email him and he replies straight away. Even now. No hesitation.

It is not usual for me to write reports/reviews etc on anything to do with the internet but your health is so important I felt that I should share with you my experience. If you are at the end of your tether, fed up, feel that no one understands and you feel on your own etc there is help out there. You are not alone and if I can do it why can’t you? You need to look after yourself and if you do cause yourself an injury or have an accident where upon you need a medical professional orthopaedic surgeon I would urge you to seriously consider Mr McDermott. You will not be sorry and will be in the best hands – literally.

Thank you Mr McDermott, I was back to work after just a few weeks of being cared for by you and your staff, not months. I really do not know where I would be now if I had not gone

private and seen you. I am able to rock climb and do all the other sporting activities I have always loved to do (but not skiing!!!) Personally I'm not that brave (yet!?!)

Mrs Glenda Braeger, June 2012