

News feature

Treatment gives new lease of life

Four years ago the News Letter reported on a new form of back care, called TAMARS, which was being pioneered in Northern Ireland. Today **STEPHEN DEMPSTER** updates the story of a treatment which is changing people's lives

A CHAMPION athlete and swimmer who was told she would never compete again because of severe back problems, has returned to competition after discovering a "miracle" cure.

Sasha Hooks, 16, from Newtownabbey has won Irish and Ulster titles in swimming and running.

But after she was carried off the running track in agony, in June 2006, consultants warned that her promising sports career seemed all but ended.

Her mother Ingrid explained: "She went to her GP, who referred her to a consultant. She had MRI scans, ordinary x-rays, went to physio, ultrasound relief, back doctors, an orthopedic surgeon. We tried everything.

"There was talk at first of stress fractures and so on. But they never got to the bottom of it.

"She was living on pain killers and was told she would never get back to her running and swimming. She was in floods of tears.

The Hooks were giving up hope by the end of 2006.

Ingrid continued: "We had tried everything and spent an absolute fortune but not really got anywhere."

Then they had a call from a friend who said former decathlete Raymond Knox was working with a new back treatment called TAMARS, at a clinic in Moira.

"We thought, 'well what have we to lose'," said Ingrid.

"All Raymond did was put some gel on Sasha's back, run his thumbs down her spine and he said 'I can cure this; I will have her running in two weeks'.

Raymond saw twists in the spine and compressed joints. He asked had Sasha had a fall,



COMPETING AGAIN: Sasha Hooks, 16, from Newtownabbey

Two years previously she had fallen from a trampoline.

He said that the impact and twists, combined with a growth spurt of four inches in the space of three months (between April and June 2006) were the reasons for the problem.

The spine had failed to cope become badly misshapen.

"After a couple of sessions (of TAMARS) Sasha was bouncing," recalled Ingrid. The transformation was amazing, it really was."

Within weeks Sasha was running again and back in the pool.

"She has taken a while to get back to the standard she was at, because she was competing at such a high level," her mum explained.

"But slowly through 2007 the form returned."

Just a fortnight ago, Sasha became all-Ireland champion in the 100-metre backstroke.

She then came second in the Ulster cross-country championships.

"Sasha now gets regular physio

which is a real help for her, given that she is competing all the time," said Ingrid.

"But it was the TAMARS treatment which turned things round."

Ex-rally driver Ian Beasant has a similar tale to tell.

Years of high-speed punishment on the roads had left him suffering from chronic back pain and associated daily fatigue.

The 46-year-old Glengormley man was often in agony, or simply found that he was unable to make it through the day without running out of energy.

"In my early 20s I rallied quite a bit as a co-driver, right up to World Championship level in 1994," he explained.

"The battering your body takes in the car was a factor for me, as was the wearing of a heavy helmet," he said.

"Then in 1998-99, I was involved in a really bad accident at the Welsh Rally."

The incident left Ian with what damaged vertebrae.

From then on he was a slave to his back pain and went nearly a decade without any sort of cure.

"Then I read about TAMARS, possibly in the News Letter. I thought I would give it a go."

Ian started off with treatment twice a week. He now goes for top-ups every few months.

"And I have no pain whatsoever," he said.

"People actually say to me 'have you grown an inch'. I don't want to sound over-the-top but my all-round healthy and feeling of well being has improved.

"I was in pain and going nowhere. I don't blame the NHS or chiropractors but this treatment is just one step above and beyond that. I'm just a different person after it."



NO MORE PAIN: Ian Beasant, Downtown Motor correspondent who has recovered from back pain thanks to TAMARS
Picture: **Bernie Brown**

Revolution in sleepy village

The sleepy village of Moira may not seem like the place for a revolution but at the 21st Century Back Care Clinic, people's lives are being changed forever.

Over the past four years, people with all manner of back complaints have been treated at the private facility, opened by local man Raymond Knox.

The clinic doesn't use traditional methods of chiropractors or physios, but employs a new treatment called TAMARS - Technology Assisted Micro-Mobilisation and Reflex Stimulation.

TAMARS is based on the understanding that most back complaints, as well as other conditions, are a result of defects and wear and tear in the spine.

All of us, as we get older, or through strenuous activity are prone to losing mobility in the spine, as the joints seize or the spinal column twists and curves.

Waringstown father and son Raymond and Jeff Knox are pas-

sionate about the TAMARS treatment. They have also opened a clinic in Edinburgh.

Raymond, an ex-international athlete, said: "We have people in who have had virtually paralysed limbs for years, and we get them working again.

"We have treated vertigo. We are now even having very good results with Fiber Myalgia and Multiple Sclerosis.

"These things are deemed medical problems which need medical solutions but they are often linked to spinal problems."

Jeff said: "We have developed techniques for tackling different problems, some which people might not immediately associate as being linked to the spine.

"Everyone who comes to us has some degree of curvature in their spine. People without pain now come for cosmetic reasons to get rid of round shoulders."

TAMARS stimulates the spinal column, returning mobility to the vertebrae and joints.

To do this, technology in the form of a PAM machine massages the joints back to life.

Invented by an engineer from Cornwall, Robert Taylor, who spent 20 years looking at the dynamics of the spine and applying the principles of engineering to create the equipment, the machine consists of software which controls a bionic hand.

The hand has four pneumatic fingers or pistons and it is used by a technician on the spinal column to stimulate those dead and stiff joints.

TAMARS is not yet formally recognised by the medical fraternity in the UK. More investment is required in clinical trials.

However, it has just received official FDA marketing and treatment clearance in the United States.

Raymond said: "The results we get are amazing so it's frustrating that we do not yet have the clinical recognition yet."