



## Ian – Chronic back pain

In some ways, Ian is a very lucky man. He has survived two serious accidents, one while riding a motorbike at the age of 26, the second, a car accident six years later. And while the accidents left him in extreme pain, an implantable drug pump now helps him to live a full, active life.

Ian's first accident happened in 1986 when he came off his motorbike, breaking his back. He spent ten months in Melbourne's Austin Hospital.

"I thought my whole world had been tipped upside-down. They thought the damage was permanent and I would never walk again.

"I had to learn to walk again. In fact, I had to learn to crawl again first. I really had to start life again. But Christmas 1986 I managed to walk out of the hospital."

While Ian was back on his feet, he was still in pain and was referred to a pain clinic. He was implanted with a spinal cord stimulator which helped him keep things under control.

Life returned to normal, but then the unthinkable happened. Ian was involved in a car accident returning home from work one day.

"When it happened the second time I just thought 'what have I done?' I must have been a tax man in a former life."

The accident caused more damage to his back and he had to take time off work. But instead of getting better, over the next four or five months, Ian's condition steadily worsened.

"Things were getting harder and harder. It was harder to walk. It was harder to get my legs moving in the morning.

"The doctor I was seeing told me it was all in my mind.

"I went for a second opinion and he found a build up of fluid on the spine. They drained it that night. It stopped the paralysis in its tracks but not the pain."

"I couldn't do much at all. I couldn't sit at a computer for more than five or six minutes at a time, push a wheelchair, drive a car. I certainly hadn't worked in a while."

Ian found that after the second accident, the spinal cord stimulator wasn't managing his pain as effectively as before. He returned to the pain clinic.

"After the first accident I was in a fair bit of pain but it was manageable, it was under control.

"Then I had the second accident and everything just became worse. We did a lot of drug trials and tests, try these tablets, do this, try that and so on. That went on for a couple of months to no avail. We seemed to have reached a dead end."

Ian's doctor suggested that he try an implantable drug delivery pump and gave Ian the name of a patient who had recently had an implant so that he could speak to someone who had been in a similar position.

"It sounded like it was the way for me to go.

"The procedure was simple. They kept me overnight as I was put under a general anaesthetic

and they let me out the next day.”

Ian’s pain is now under control and his life is back on track. He has started on a new career as a driving instructor for people with disabilities.

“I’m leading a normal life. I’m back working anything up to 15 hours a day and I’m doing everything anyone who had snapped their back and had spinal damage would do. I’m probably even doing more than them.

“I know the pumps are not cheap, but they are definitely worth their weight in gold.

“I can’t live without it. It’s as simple as that.”