

11 December 2017

Mr Martin Knight
The Spinal Foundation
27 Harley Street
London W1G 9QP

Dear Mr Knight

I hope that all is well with you and yours.

I cannot believe that two years have passed since my operation at Fawkham Manor. Even worse that I have not written to thank you, appalling of me, for which my sincere apologies. A fair degree of overseas travel, combined with care of seven (soon to be eight) grandchildren between us, scattered up and down the country has conspired to scupper my good intentions. However, I believe my back is now stable and I am determined to put that right.

I am very pleased to say that the quality of my life nowadays is a far cry from that of unbearable pain, utter despair and increasing dependance on drugs prior to my operation, for which I cannot thank you enough. I am ever grateful to you for your expert advice and treatment, also indebted to Chris Boynes for his recommendation.

As for the operation itself, I found this to be truly inspirational and I was pleased to be awake for the initial part of it. Forever imprinted on my mind is the recollection of endeavouring to answer your important questions regarding pain levels without lifting my head from the cushion ring hole - so comical, even during such a time of keen accuracy. Thankfully the anaesthetist was supremely skilled at controlling the pain and more importantly any small movements didn't appear to distract you from the precision of the job in hand. Utterly heroic and applaudable!

The really great news was that the cushioning effect of the gel stix was immediate and, touch wood, to date I have had no recurrence of the excruciating bone against bone (with poor flattened nerve in between). Hurrah. I have since recommended you to various others who are suffering with bad back pain. As I commented following my operation, I would have no hesitation in repeating the experience (although in all honesty I would rather not have the need!).

My journey of rehabilitation for the first year or so was a matter of going from day to day, through some ups and downs, waiting to see how things settle. Around August time last year I eventually found an authentic and dedicated Pilates teacher in nearby Holkham, Wells-next-the-Sea. A professional ballet dancer in her previous life she has been teaching pilates for approx 30 years; fiery and outspoken and with a terrific sense of humour in equal measure she certainly gets results and commands the respect of her students. Following several one to one sessions at her home studio in the early days, I have since been attending her mat classes twice a week where possible and this seems to help considerably. (Being convinced that my lower vertebrae may be fused, one of her occasional nicknames for me is "Breezblock"! ~ She may be right about the vertebrae. I am not wholly convinced that this stiffness will go, but with work and time it may change a little.)

Together with Pilates, I have learned to manage my back pain by carefully avoiding certain triggers; trying to keep myself active, neither standing nor sitting for long periods, considering my posture, standing at the kitchen unit with my laptop ~ instead of sitting at the dining table and leaning my body in towards it, my neck forwards too ~ sleeping on my back and sitting in an upright chair with firm cushions. I occasionally get slight sciatica for a day or two, however this is a rare occurrence which can soon be relieved with some exercises.

I have been very impressed with the care you took in explaining everything as we went along and by your meticulous attention to detail.

Thank you so much, once again.

From both Chris and myself, our very best wishes to you and yours this Christmas time.

Kind regards

Tris & Valerie