

December 2010

Dear Dr. Moore, Staff, Patients, and Potential Patients,

My name is Rob, and I spent close to 7 years in desperate pain, while I watched my whole life slip away, fraction by fraction and my dreams fade away day by day with no foreseeable resource to get any tiny piece of my health and life on track.

It all started with a nagging pain in my lower right side of my back. Having spent 20 years in construction, it wasn't like I hadn't felt a sore back from long hours of hard physical work, but at the age of 36, the pain didn't go away with rest or an ice pack, and after a few months of putting up with it, and with pressure from my employer, friends and family, I reluctantly gave in and went to see my family doctor. CAT scans and MRIs were ordered, as well as prescriptions for anti-inflammatory drugs and muscle relaxants. A week or so after, my doctor's office called with an appointment to see an orthopaedic surgeon for the NEXT DAY, which scared the heck out of me.

When I got there and was asked to go into his office, it was not to go into an examination room but into his actual office strewn with lit up pictures of what I assumed were the MRI and CAT scans of my back. I was asked to sit down as he started pointing out all the problems with my back in image after image. I was so taken by surprise that everything he was saying came in slow motion - words I wasn't familiar with, that I just couldn't comprehend. His final sentence ended with, "there's nothing I can do for you, but to send you to Toronto to another orthopaedic surgeon who specializes in spinal fusion surgery". My immediate reaction was to go back to work, and tell my boss it's just a temporary situation. But the diagnosis was what it was; Stenosis of the spine, 4 herniated discs, a compressed nerve at the L5-S1 level and osteoarthritis.

I took the rest of the week off from work, working on weights, jogging, and swimming - determined he was wrong, while suffering enormous pain, trying to dispel his diagnosis. Subsequent visits to my GP trying to find something to relieve the pain while waiting the 9 months to see the surgeon in Toronto, all the while desperately trying to keep my job and pretend everything was all right.

I tried taking a host of prescriptions including but not limited to arithrotec, toradol, vioxx and celebrex to no avail, and a lot of unfavourable side effects. Reluctantly, my GP started me on Tynelol #3's but they did nothing for me but upset my stomach, and created an inability to sleep because of worsening pain.

It was now January and while still trying to perform my duties as an operations manager, I had no choice but to jump into my old role as a heavy equipment operator on this particular day, as my main operator was away. After spending an hour or so digging up a leaking water main, I attempted to exit the machine to have a closer look into the situation, but I couldn't get out of the seat. I had had numbness before, but this time I couldn't move my right leg and my left leg was all pins and needles. One of the guys was scared I was having a stroke or a heart attack and radioed our boss to come and convince me to call an ambulance. After calming everyone down 2 co-workers carried me from the backhoe to my wife awaiting me in my truck. A six hour wait in emergency, only to see the orthopaedic surgeon who originally diagnosed me, resulted in emergency surgery the following day with a spinal injection, to the L5-S1 disc to try and dissolve the disc which had severely ruptured. That was the last day I operated any heavy equipment.

I spent three months off work, going to physical therapy, and only leaving bed to go to the couch or the floor to do the prescribed exercises. I was now taking oxcycodone (percocet) 4 times a day to cope with pain.

Finally, the day arrived to see the orthopaedic surgeon in Toronto, about spinal fusion. After studying all the x-rays, MRIs and CAT scans, and a total physical, trying to bend my legs, have me bend over etc, he sat me down to explain his prognosis. His plan was to fuse my spine from the sacrum (tailbone) to the 1st disc. This was a 6-9 hour process, with titanium screws and wire fused onto my spine (from one vertebra to another) then use bone from my hips to fuse over top of the metal. Following this with 9-12 months of rest and physiotherapy, then he would repeat the process to the above disc. He explained that I would require subsequent fusions every 3-5 years. Each disc would wear at a faster rate because of the fusions below because the unoperated on discs would take the brunt of all physical movements in my body and therefore would wear at a faster rate. This would require more surgery, and by the time I reached my early 60's I would be in a wheelchair, and most likely on pain medication for the rest of my life. He was willing to do the surgery ASAP which would be in about 10-12 months. I was devastated, as was my wife and family.

The idea that once I started the process I was basically committed to a life of pain, surgery, recuperation, 1 to 3 years of living and then starting the whole process over again was devastating to a man who was an admitted workaholic, and who had worked since he was 15 years old while taking vacations less times than the fingers on one hand. When work got slow, I took second jobs and now I could hardly get into a car to go see a doctor for more pain medication.

I started talking to friends and co-workers, friends of friends, anyone who knew anyone that had similar problems, surgeries etc. I watched a documentary on the surgery on either CBC or TVO, and everyone who had the surgery said if they were to do it all over again they would opt out of the surgery, for the pain and anguish they went through, and the results after a year were simply not worth it.

It was getting close to the date of my surgery and something was holding me back. The doctor's office in Toronto called telling me that I would need to start getting blood taken and stored for the operation. In that 8 months of awaiting the surgery I had not met or spoke to one single person who would recommend having it done. A friend called me to tell me about another documentary on TV, and to be sure to watch it. A doctor named Hamilton Hall was interviewed. He is a well respected orthopaedic surgeon and I will never forget what he said about fusion surgery. He explained that he recommends ALL his patients to seek any and all forms of treatment, for back pain, to 95% of his patients other than the patients who have broken their spine because it is PERMANENT, and there's no going back.

The final experience that stopped me from having it done was one day I was hobbling into the pharmacy to get my pain prescription refilled and down the sidewalk I saw a man walking with a cane as I was, and noticed he was noticing me. I continued into the pharmacy, got my pills, and exited the door. As I was trying to get my leg over the curb leaning on the front of my truck, cane balancing me with my other hand, this gentleman with the cane was leaning on the other side of my door. He said "is it your back or your leg that is causing you to walk like that?" I said "well ...both". He said, "Oh, you have had the fusion operation." I said "No, not yet". He turned around and lifted his shirt to reveal two 3 inch scars on his back and tailbone he said, "Don't do it. You're a young man. It will ruin your life, as it has mine." I was speechless and simply said well thanks, and hoped him well. I told my wife about this man and all the other opinions I had heard and explained to her that I could barely live the way I was and how am I gonna survive if it's any worse. I was hopeless. Our decision was made. I cancelled the surgery.

What followed for the next 5 and half years was more pain, more desperation, watching my children grow, with what was a shadow of my former self. I watched my nest egg slip away, my home deteriorate, my relationship with friends and family pressured as they all felt they had a responsibility of having to pitch in for all the things I could no longer do myself. Oh, I had some days that I could fiddle about and maybe vacuum the main floor of the house (I spent 2 years never going up stairs to bed for fear of not being able to get down the stairs to use the bathroom, if I could in fact control that need, which got worse as time went by.)

I was now taking time released oxycodone (oxycontin) at 160 tablets every 30 days at 20 mgs. A good night's sleep was 4-5 hours. I couldn't sit at the table to eat dinner. I had to stand at the counter or lie on the floor and shovel it into my mouth sideways. My neighbour cut my grass, tended my gardens, shovelled the snow, put up the Christmas lights, washed my wife's car as we had to sell my truck, to make ends meet. My wife had to take on more responsibilities at work, and my mother in law retired 2 years early to tend our children and do the errands, take them to baseball, karate etc. The good days were getting further and further apart, to the point when they did come they weren't that good. Then a new company took over where my wife worked, and decided that they couldn't continue to pay her at her rate without increasing her work load which would entail her having to travel over night every week, or relocate out of town to their new office. We had no choice but to relocate to Simcoe County, leaving our friends and family, and all the help we had come to depend on. It was the hardest thing we ever had to endure, other than my health issues, in our marriage of 15 years, but would prove to be the best thing that ever happened to my back.

We had to completely and financially start from scratch with no physical help with our home or children. We found a small home (with a washroom on the same level as all bedrooms) close enough to my wife's office that she could run home in 5 minutes, and far enough the kids would be bussed to school.

One morning while asleep on the couch my son awoke me with a sound of excitement and urgency in his voice. There was a commercial on TV about spinal decompression, and he wanted me to hear it. I half listened, while groggy from medication and 3 hours sleep. It spoke about this "new to me" procedure. Later that day I started researching it on the computer. I called my wife at work so she could print up anything and everything she could find on it. It made sense to me. I mean, in layman's terms if something is squished together, how can it function? If you pull it apart and strengthen the surrounding structure, surely it would function better, right? I mean I didn't function at all. I had gone from a straight standing 210lb 5 foot 11 workaholic to a 160lb hunched over invalid over 7 years. I couldn't lift either leg off the floor without help, and couldn't put my socks, shoes or pants on without help.

I needed help in every aspect of my life. Now living in a small town and not knowing a sole, even my new neighbours were now doing what my old neighbours did with the only difference being my new neighbour was 75 yrs old. Could this new treatment actually make even a little difference in my life? I made the call. I set an appointment with Dr Moore.

The day I was supposed to go, I was unable to because I was in too much pain. I called and Dr. Moore offered to come and see me. I was astounded. This gentleman was going to drive to come and see me? What kind of doctor makes house calls these days? I kindly declined his offer, but it sure made me feel a sense of trust, and his compassion was as evident in his voice as in his offer. I called Dr. Moore the following week and told him I wanted to see him but it is difficult to pick a day when I will be well

enough to make the trip (about a 100 km from where I live). He made it simple by telling me his office hours and an open invitation and to just call when I was leaving.

The following week I was feeling up to it. I called and told him I would be there that day and an hour later while putting the garbage out the back door I slipped head over heels on the deck. Again, he offered to come see me that night. It took 2 weeks before I healed from what was becoming a common occurrence, as I couldn't feel my legs, and had no balance what so ever.

FINALLY, I made it to see him. He was quite busy as the office was full of people coming and going some looking like I did, others looking like they didn't belong there as they didn't seemingly look like they had any back/leg or health issues. Dr. Moore introduced me to a man of similar age who was about half way through the treatment, and he looked like I did...20 years ago. He told me that he was doing and feeling great and that he had similarly been off work for a few years and he hadn't felt better in as many years. Dr Moore brought me in for examination, reviewed my MRI and CAT scan, showed me where the problems were and how spinal decompression could help me. Then...then the cost! AHHHH! I knew it wasn't gonna be cheap, but I was a little taken back by the cost. Let's face it; a facility like this isn't cheap to run. Staff doesn't work for free, and the machinery isn't free to buy either, besides the fact of all the research, and education that has accumulated into what I saw before me. I came home that night somewhat dismayed, and upset because we simply did not have the money, and I couldn't bare to tell my kids and wife, them waiting in the driveway to help me out of the car, as I always call ahead so someone was there to help me out, that the visit was just a waste of time. Trying to not spoil their enthusiasm I simply said we will have to discuss it.

That night we talked about it and weighed out the pros and cons and what we came up with was that there was only one con, and if the treatments worked, that con would turn to a pro. We had a credit card that we kept hidden away, for emergencies, and in my wife's mind we were living in a catastrophic emergency, and why wouldn't we? So we did.

The first day of treatment, was full of enthusiasm, and hope. As they suited me up my heart was pounding, and I was obviously scared. There were two other people having treatments and they seemed to be comfortable, so I took a deep breath and we proceeded. I remember that towards the end of the treatment I was anxious to get off the table. I wouldn't call it painful, but towards the end it got uncomfortable. After an adjustment, I felt a burning sensation, and a little tingly in the back but it was all good. I was doing something about it. Finally!

The next 2 treatments were the same, but I was getting familiar with the procedure, and less scared of it. The forth treatment was an historic day. Living north of Barrie, it was an hour and a half drive for me to and from the clinic, and about half way home my right foot felt very hot. I thought maybe my truck was overheating or worse maybe on fire. I made my way to the right side of the highway, and pulled over to investigate. Nothing! So I got back in the truck and proceeded home. The burning sensation wasn't going away and I bent over to feel the carpet on the floor, to see if it was hot. It wasn't, and then it came to me. I hadn't felt my right foot in 6 or more years and all of a sudden, I did!

What happened that day continued over the next month of treatments, and at about the 28-30th treatment I had gained all the feeling back in BOTH legs! I had 45 treatments all together, and it was the best cash, time, health and wellness investment I have ever made in my life. It truly saved my life. There were so many things that I hadn't done in so long, that it was almost like being re-born. I started slowly,

making sure not to over do it. My last treatment was in April of 2010, and I can honestly say there has not been 1 single episode or moment of pain in my back since February of 2010. Not one!

I found a local chiropractor, who I see bi-weekly. Dr Moore set me up with orthotics for my shoes. I got a membership @ the Y.M.C.A. I started walking in the water, and gradually, started swimming laps. I am very careful to sit with proper posture. I do some stretching exercises that Dr. Moore showed me. By July of this past summer, I was walking 3kms a day, swimming laps @ the Y, and going to the beach, and playing with my kids in the water, like I was 12 yrs old...not 43 !!'ve cut down trees, cut my own grass, garden, play basketball with my boys, and sit in a boat again. I golfed 6 times in late summer and through the fall, and sure I felt a little sore the next day (more in the arms and legs) but it was the muscles not the bones. I can't say enough of how VAX-D and Dr. Moore's clinic transformed my life, my family's life and our health.

Living with so much pain, almost always leads the strongest of us into depression, and hopelessness. Doing nothing about my back for all those years, took its toll on my family, and our overall health. I wish I had of heard of this treatment 6 years ago, but am so thankful that I did, and decided to go for it. All the positive results I read about, and Dr. Moore assured me of, was true. It works! I am living proof. Thank you Dr. Moore for helping me transform my life. Thank you from my wife and children, for giving them back a man who can walk with his head held high...with NO PAIN!

Rob Watters
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