

Stroke victim's new lease of life

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Eddie Baier has had to cope with the use of one hand since a stroke left him disabled over two years ago.

This was a devastating blow for Eddie, who runs a landscape garden business, and loves the manual side of his job.

But life has changed for Eddie since he started taking part in a revolutionary new treatment, which has seen him recover much of the feeling in his hand in just five months.



Like thousands of stroke victims up and down the country who are left with a disability, Eddie was told that his recovery had 'reached a plateau' and he would be unlikely regain the use of his arm. Not one to give up or let go of his dream of getting back in the garden, Eddie turned to alternative remedies like acupuncture, reiki and pilates.

But it wasn't until he read about a new technology called SaeboFlex and special training clinic that things improved dramatically for Eddie. Following his treatment in July, Eddie has begun to carry out everyday tasks such as feeding himself, opening doors and even driving his car. He said: "The course was hard work, but very quickly I began to feel sensations in my hand and that was like a light at the end of a tunnel. Now I keep surprising myself at the things I can do – although my wife wasn't too happy when she found me using my chainsaw in the back garden the other day!"

The key to these dramatic results is SaeboFlex – a tool that enables some patients to perform simple tasks like holding a drink bottle to their mouth for the first time in years. The device is specially adapted and fitted to suit each patient and consists of a series of springs that gently encourage the fingers to grip and release when special exercises are carried out each day.

SaeboFlex was pioneered in the USA and introduced into the UK by physiotherapist Glyn Blakey in 2003. Leyburn-based physiotherapist Shona Eyre, is one of only a few fully trained physiotherapists in the UK able to offer this treatment and has been supporting Eddie's recovery. She said: "Strokes are the largest cause of disability in the UK and recovery can be slow, frustrating and partial for most patients, but this new technology allows stroke survivors to do things that have previously been impossible. "Eddie is the perfect patient for this treatment because he is very determined, he has a positive outlook and he's worked so hard for these results." The treatment is not currently available on the NHS and therefore cost was a serious consideration for Eddie who had seen his income drop dramatically since his stroke. The splint and five-day training clinic was £3,000.

But despite this Eddie believes that it was money well spent. He said: "Being able to use my hand to do everyday things is the best present I could wish for this Christmas."