

Janet had suffered a lifetime of discomfort

REAL-LIFE CASUALTY

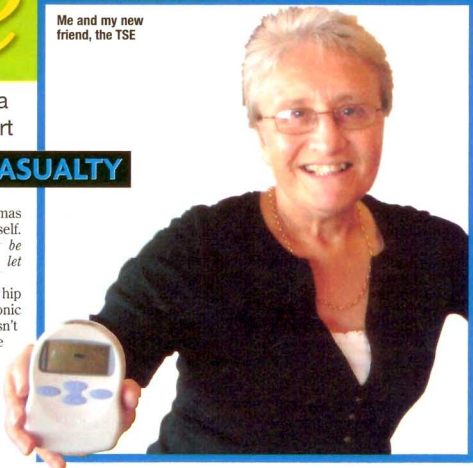
Writing out my Christmas cards, I smiled to myself. *Normally, I wouldn't be able to think about Christmas, let alone look forward to it.*

I was born with congenital hip disease, and suffered from chronic nerve pain. But this wasn't recognised until I reached the age of 16.

The doctors just dismissed it as growing pains.

For the next 13 years, I lived in excruciating pain until I was able to have a hip replacement when I was 29.

Me and my new friend, the TSE



PAIN CONTROLLER

I felt too young to be going through it, but I just wanted the pain to go away. Sadly, it didn't. The first operation wasn't a success.

'I just want to give up,' I thought. But that wasn't in my nature, and I had two further operations to try to get rid of the pain.

It felt like a hot poker sticking in my side. I was so absorbed by the pain, I couldn't concentrate on

anything else. I couldn't even get around the supermarket by myself. I had to get my carer to take me around in a wheelchair.

On New Year's Eve, 10 years ago, she forgot to lock the wheels, and I went flying out of my chair and sprawled across the floor of my local Sainsbury's. That really hurt.

As I was helped back into my chair, I brushed myself down, and carried on as usual.

However, the pain got worse every day, so I decided to go to see a specialist.

'When did you break your back?' he asked, after examining me.

'Blimey! I didn't know I had,' I said, shocked.

'It must have been the accident, when I fell out of the wheelchair.'

The doctor looked concerned. 'Most of your problems stem from your back,' he said.

'It's completely twisted, and causing the hip pain. We're going to have to break your right leg, and take the stem of your hip out.'

I felt so helpless.

It was like I was falling apart.

'I need a skeleton replacement,' I joked with the consultant.

One afternoon, I noticed an offer in an Acticare advert for a free 30-day trial of a TSE (Transcutaneous Spinal Electroanalgesia).

It blocks pain signals from the back to the brain. 'I've got nothing to lose,' I thought.

When it came through, I placed the pads on my lower back and neck. After half an hour, I started to feel different.

'The pain's easing,' I thought. 'I've been using my little 'ally against pain' for nearly three years. I eventually had to buy it, but I wouldn't be without it now.'

These days I don't feel so desperate. It's as if I've got my life back again.

I'm looking forward to spending Christmas with my family and friends, and really being able to enjoy myself.

**Janet Wilbrey, 60,
Hove, Sussex**

CONGENITAL HIP DISEASE – THE FACTS:

- The disease tends to run in families, and is more common in women than men.
- The ball and socket joint, which normally allows for a wide range of motion, is too lax, leading to instability of the hips.
- Symptoms include waddling, limping, and having unequal leg lengths.
- Early diagnosis is the key – left undiagnosed, it can lead to long-term damage.
- For further information about Acticare, visit www.acticare.com or call 0800 028 1400.