



Case study

Name: Dawn Nicolls
Address: Hinstock, Shropshire
Age: 60
Family: Married to Chris with two children – aged 29, 28
Job: Full time carer for her father, was previously swimming instructor
Procedure: Full knee replacement with rapid recovery service
Hospital: Spire Yale Hospital
Surgeon: Mr Tony Smith, consultant orthopaedic surgeon

Dawn Nicolls, 60, from Hinstock had been suffering with severe pain in her left knee for several years. The excruciating pain, which made her feel as if her knee had collapsed, caused her to limp and after a visit to her doctor, she was prescribed with anti-inflammatory tablets and strong painkillers to aid the pain.

Being a keen horse rider, the pain in Dawn's knee caused a huge hindrance to her riding. Not wanting to be defeated or to have to stop riding, she would dose up on painkillers when she knew she had a horse show coming up. Dawn comments: "I know that taking pain killers was not the answer, but I didn't want to let the pain stop me from riding. I even had a special, higher mounting block made so that I could get onto my horse without much trouble."

Early in 2009, Dawn tore a hamstring in the back of her left knee. Her doctor referred her to a local physiotherapist. Her physio suggested whatever was causing the pain in her knee could also be the cause of the hamstring tear and recommended she visit Mr Tony Smith, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon who specialises in knees at Spire Yale Hospital.

Mr Smith comments: "From the x-ray results taken at her first consultation it was clear that Dawn needed a full knee replacement, the cartilage in her joint was completely worn away, effectively leaving her walking bone on bone"

Dawn comments: "Having a full knee replacement and the time it would take to recover concerned me because I am a full time carer for my 85 year old father at home and I also look after six horses, which involves a lot of work. I asked Mr Smith whether I could put off having the operation for a while, but he advised I should have it sooner rather than later."



Mr Smith comments: "Dawn was concerned about the time she would have to take out following a knee replacement. However I was able to offer her a new patient focused approach to knee joint replacement. The new Rapid Recovery Service involves a carefully constructed multidisciplinary team who guide my patients through a structured, evidence based pathway of care which achieves excellent results. The majority of patients are ready to go home within 24 to 72 hours, most are able to drive within three to four weeks, and usually start to experience the full benefit of their joint replacement soon after that.

The function of a knee replacement is usually excellent within ten to twelve weeks of surgery but even then patients can look forward to further, steady improvement for up to eighteen months after surgery.

Dawn says: "With the Rapid Recovery Service available to me, I was able to organise alternative care for my dad for the short time I would be in hospital and for my brief recovery time at home. I made an appointment to have my operation on 16th November 2009. I was very pleased with the treatment I received at Spire Yale Hospital, I really felt I could trust Mr Smith and his team, I felt that nothing was too much trouble, the care was superb."

She continues: "I went in to hospital for the operation on the Monday and was ready to go home by the Thursday after having physiotherapy. Because I was going to find it difficult to travel to the hospital on a regular basis, we arranged for my physio to carry on treating me twice a week and providing me with daily exercises. I left the hospital on two crutches and within a week I was down to one crutch, I was driving again after three weeks and within a month after the operation I was walking without any crutches. I am thrilled with how quickly I have recovered, it means I can get back to caring for my father and I'm really looking forward to riding again, due to this cold weather I haven't been able to get out, but hopefully I will be riding in the next few weeks. Physically looking after the horses has become so much easier since the operation, I'm getting the jobs done twice as fast because I'm not in pain."