

## TESTIMONIAL

September, 2005.

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### HIP REPLACEMENT in POLAND.

After a referral for an X-ray on my right hip in Oct. 2004, and a follow-up visit to my doctor, it was confirmed that I needed a joint replacement which was actually ready to be done then. However, my doctor advised me against being put on the waiting list at the County Hospital as I was quite young (64) to have the operation and would probably be in need of another one in about twenty years' time!

At this point my mobility was reasonably good but it was painful — particularly during the night when it could prevent me from actually getting to sleep or would wake me up because it became so stiff and painful.

A private consultation with the Orthopaedic surgeon in December resulted in my own doctor's visit being re-iterated but with a recommendation for a prescription for an anti-inflammatory drug and an increase in the dose of Glucosamine & Chondroitin I was taking. A course of which followed.

By March of 2005 the pain became much worse and I became far less mobile — by May I was quite

lame and very reliant on a walking stick. I could walk only a very short distance before needing to sit down and was often needing to sit to do household chores and found bending very difficult.

Another visit to my doctor was curtailed by the announcement in the local Press that the Orthopaedic waiting list at the County Hospital was to be closed for further referrals until Dec. 2005 to twelve rural Health Centres (of which mine was one) to enable the department to meet Government targets.

I knew I really could not continue <sup>with</sup> the way things were and I contacted Barbara Thurgood & Co., and after an introductory (but very informative chat) with Steve got back to him and was offered a consultation with Professor Franczuk of the Krakow Clinic with a provisional travel date two weeks later.

Professor Franczuk, after seeing my X-Ray, confirmed that my hip joint was in need of replacement after which, he assured me my quality of life would be greatly improved so I had no hesitation in taking up the place to travel to Poland two weeks later.

Barbara Thurgood and Co., offer an excellent "package" which not only includes the joint replacement operation and intensive physiotherapy

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but also provides transport to and from the U.K. airport.

Two nights before I was due to be collected I was contacted by the driver from the taxi company to introduce himself and to give me a collection time. Because of the distance from my home to Gatwick I was collected the day before and taken to the Croydon Park Hotel for an overnight stay (also included in the "package") ready for an early departure for Gatwick the next day.

My driver was very pleasant and kind and after picking up another patient we arrived at our hotel mid-afternoon to be met by Barbara and Steve Thurgood who checked us in and dealt with our luggage and had laid on tea and biscuits in the hotel lounge where we met another patient who would be travelling with us. Barbara had arranged for an early call for us and we <sup>were</sup> picked-up and taken to Gatwick for our flight. At the airport we were transported to check-in in a buggy and had just a brief wait whilst Barbara dealt with luggage then again by buggy to Passport Control, then the scanner and into departure to wait. By then we had been joined by patient No. 4 and his wife who accompanied him for the whole month. Steve and Barbara

then fetched coffee for us and before too long we were taken out to the waiting aircraft and settled into our seats for the 2 hrs (approx) flight to Krakow.

On arrival in Krakow we waited in the plane until all the other passengers left and then we boarded ~~on~~ a vehicle with a hydraulic lift and asked to sit in wheelchairs — we <sup>were</sup> then wheeled ahead of the queues to show passports and then waited for Steve to claim our luggage and lead us outside to await the clinic transport.

Throughout the journey from London + Poland, Barbara and Steve were so kind and caring and professional.

When we reached the Clinic we were greeted by Renata and Miluszy, our Co-ordinators who showed us to our rooms and settled us in, acquainting us with light switches, T.V. remotes etc. In each room was a small selection of books and videos for our use and a list of other videos available. ~~After lunch~~ which we took advantage of the pleasant evening and walked the perimeter of the car park/helicopter pad and got to know each other a little more.

Days one and two were taken up with all the necessary tests prior to an operation — interspersed with more walking and chatting.

Day three was operation day — overnight in the recovery then back to our own rooms early on

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day four. The next two days were spent in bed and then the following day I began gentle physiotherapy — a machine which was placed on the bed — my leg strapped into a cradle and then gently moved up and down. This would continue, daily, throughout my stay — with the rate being gradually increased daily to improve the mobility of the new joint etc. Then I was introduced to the Zimmer frame and taught how to walk — from then onwards I progressed daily and by the time we moved over to the re-habilitation block, <sup>on day 9</sup> I was walking well and almost ready to rely on one crutch only. Then came the session in the gym — again exercises to strengthen muscles and improve mobility — the physiotherapy, in total was between three and five hours per day and our therapists were so kind, caring and encouraging — these <sup>gym</sup> sessions — so important to our progress — were also great fun and took place daily. In between sessions and meals we were encouraged to take walks outside — a little and often — we needed little encouragement — we were a jolly quintet and really enjoyed each other's company.

Right after the operation I had very little pain (more discomfort) which quickly subsided and I could not believe how well I felt and the progress of

made so quickly.

Our Co-ordinators are the most charming people and if we wanted any shopping done, or 'phone cards or currency they were happy to do this ~~plus~~ any minor problems (and they were very minor) were quickly solved — always with such kindness and grace.

Our return home was just as hassle free with one of the ~~hospital~~ clinic doctors accompanying us to Gatwick. Again we were fact-tracked and shepherded through Krakow airport — then transferred by vehicle to the plane and met by airport staff at Gatwick with wheelchairs, then into a buggy — again Passports were dealt with, luggage identified and collected and then we <sup>were</sup> welcomed back by Barbara & Steve and taken out to our waiting transport home.

From my point of view — the whole experience — from start to finish was professional, seamless and enjoyable. I made new friends and met some of the Clinic's Polish patients, which was a pleasure.

On the Saturday before our return home Barbara and Steve had arranged a buggy ride around Krakow which lasted for about two hours, followed by a traditional lunch ~~in~~ in a great restaurant. There is just so much to see and history to absorb

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- that the trip just 'scratches the surface' but begs the visitor to return and explore - maybe once the new joint has been 'run-in'!

After almost two weeks at home I am (so I'm told) walking well, without a stick mostly, and am able to do many things around the house - I just realise now how diminished my life was pre-operation.

I am indebted to the Professor who gave me my new joint and his team and also the Professor of the Rehabilitation unit and his team - and not least Barbara Thurgood etc. for organising the whole thing.

I know that had I had this done privately in U.K. I would not have made the same progress and been so mobile and the whole process would have been much more expensive.

One final word - the clinic (both sections) was scrupulously clean, as were all the staff - nursing and ancillary - which was very re-assuring - and certainly worth remembering.