

## **A beneficiary's story of Living with Pain**

I have come to realise that pain will (unfortunately) always be a part of my life, especially as I get older each year! I am not totally against the use of using medication to control my pain, but I am presently able to keep the pain at bay by other means.

With assistance from the Trust, I have been seeing Dr Cowan at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital on an annual basis for the past three years. He advocates a routine of daily stretching exercises. I know this definitely makes a big difference - if I exercise daily my pain all but completely vanishes.

I have a stretching routine lasting about 45 minutes which is carried out mostly sitting on a large gym ball. I focus on my upper and lower spine, shoulders, neck.

In the past six months I have also been having some one-to-one Pilates lessons. These last an hour and I work on improving my core strength. The exercise also helps me to identify poor posture. I am now aware that I should not be hunching my shoulders up and that sitting down for long periods of times shortens the ligaments and muscles in the front of my legs which has resulted in not being able to straighten my legs out completely. All is not lost - as long as I exercise to strengthen and lengthen the muscles in the opposite direction, and my Pilates instructor has taught me how to do this. Strengthening core muscles definitely helps with reducing pain levels and also enhances balance and stability. This will help prevent falls and injuries which as we all know can cause devastating and sometimes permanent injury.

I have a regular (fortnightly) deep tissue massage which concentrates on any part of my body that is particularly painful. This is usually my neck, shoulders, upper and lower back, hips and an ankle that was badly damaged in a road traffic accident and subsequently fused.

Of course, I do sometimes use pain killers. Either an Ibuprofen gel - which someone has to apply to any annoying knots in my neck or hip and then paracetamol.