



Speaking from Experience *Stroke in Midlife*

Transcript for chapter 2 of 9: Physical impact

Jack, 53 years, stroke 11 years ago: I woke up in the morning and I was paralysed on one side and didn't know what happened. I said to my wife, "I can't move". So, she said, "You'd better stay there". She rang up a friend of ours who's a doctor and they came straight away. They said, "You've had a stroke!" I said, "No, I haven't. I've had this before." She said, "Don't you move". Within 10 minutes, an ambulance came.

Robyn, 48 years, stroke 11 years ago, & mother Cath: She'd had a cerebral haemorrhage, a middle one, with two secondaries, she was in a very, very bad way.

Leonie, 37 years, stroke 4 years ago & husband George: I actually had a left temporal bleed; it was actually a bleed within the brain. They believe that it was caused by an aneurism, which is a thinning area, perhaps, of one of the arteries, and it's just burst.

Jack: I was rushed to Box Hill hospital and put in intensive care because my heart was out of beat.

Helen, 54 years, stroke 11 years ago: I was as though all my life energy, the life force in me, was just draining away. And afterwards, that must have been when the haemorrhage, the cerebral haemorrhage, was occurring.

Leonie & husband George: I had lost right side vision. I was paralysed on my right side, all the way down. And my speech was probably the most, I found the most difficult problem that I had. I was pretty much unable to speak in any way, shape or form, apart from single words.

Leonie & husband George: She was able to make sounds, but she wasn't able to articulate words. She didn't know how to put sounds together to give it a meaning.

Jack: Yeah, I was paralysed, I couldn't walk, naturally. My speech was gone. My left arm was gone; my left side was gone.

Helen: The left side of my body became completely paralysed and I guess that was the most significant thing, in that, I didn't lose speech and I didn't lose consciousness or anything like that.

Noelene, 63 years, stroke 7 years ago: I couldn't speak. I could only grip hands.

Leonie & husband George: Her peripheral vision still remains limited in that if she was looking at a person's face, the left side of that person's face would not be visible to her.

Robyn & mother Cath: She has had to relearn absolutely everything; from cleaning her teeth, to dressing herself. Absolutely everything, she's had to be taught. She's paralysed right down one side, so one arm, her right arm she can't use. She has learnt to walk, she's learnt to write a little bit with her left hand.



Jack: I got most of my gains in the first three months, I think, when I started to learn to walk again.

Helen: You'd go for so long and you wouldn't seem to see any changes. You'd seem to plateau and nothing seemed to change for weeks and weeks and weeks. And then the physio would say, "Oh, you can move your arm a little bit more" or "you've got a little bit more hip movement", or something like that. Often it was very, very subtle.

Noelene: I think I've had a gradual improvement all the time. And I think, possibly, I'm still improving.

Helen: The greatest recover probably, in terms of return of movement, was probably in those first seven and a half months when I was in the hospital.

Jack: Everything is one-handed. You've got to start all over again. Nothing comes naturally anymore. So, you've got to train your body to do everything the awkward way.

Helen: I'm not good when I'm out amongst people. I seem to have a spatial problem, with space and movement and noise.

Leonie & husband George: When I get tired I have more trouble looking for words.

Helen: If I didn't go to church, for example. I'm sure people initially thought, 'she really has changed, she doesn't seem to want to talk to anybody and she just goes straight back to the car after the service and she doesn't join in'. But really it just took all my effort and energies to get from point A to point B, where I couldn't sort of walk or move my head. I mean, all the concentration had to go from getting one leg after the other without falling. And when you fall over in public, it is a wee bit embarrassing.

Leonie & husband George: Vision isn't really a big problem now. I still find reading can be tiring to a point. But at times I wonder whether it's tiring because of the vision, as in a lot of scanning, or whether it's the concentration.

Helen: And then, of course, you're not walking on a flat surface. You've got all sorts of surfaces. You're up and you're down and they go on this angle and that angle. You've got the wind to contend with, and what people might think is a breeze is a hurricane to somebody who hasn't got much in the way of balance. So, while I probably wasn't encouraged to use a wheelchair when I was out, I eventually got to the point where I thought that if I'm going to operate as a fairly normal sort of person out in the community, I really need a wheelchair.