

Pain-relieving surgery unique to the Royal

Sally endured continuous pain for three years, taking massive doses of pain-killing medication on a daily basis and trying to lead a somewhat 'normal' life. It was the wonderful support from her family that helped her through this painful experience that began after major surgery back in 2005.

After consultation with numerous doctors (Sally does not live in Sydney), a specialist in Tamworth referred Sally to the Royal Hospital for Women (the only women's hospital in NSW) with the hope that there would be someone who could help her and alleviate the suffering she had been going through for so long. After meeting Prof Thierry Vancaillie, a gynaecologist specialising in endo-scopic surgery, Sally knew there was 'light at the end of the tunnel'. Sally was suffering from entrapment of the pudendal nerve, which is one of the most important nerves in the pelvis. Approximately one in 5,000 people (predominantly women) will develop problems with the pudendal nerve.

It was just twelve months ago that Prof Vancaillie was in France assisting Dr Baurtant, a highly skilled specialist who performs pudendal release surgery. On his return to the 'Royal', Prof Vancaillie obtained permission to perform the first surgery in October last year. The 'Royal' now has a team of qualified professionals that work with patients suffering from pudendal nerve entrapment. Under the leadership of Prof Vancaillie, the team consists of a physiotherapist, nursing specialists, gynaecologist and acupuncturist. Patients are referred from all over Australia and New Zealand.

In January this year, Sally was the very first patient operated on at the 'Royal' for pudendal nerve



Professor Thierry Vancaillie

entrapment. In February 2008, The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation funded Dr Baurtant (specialist from France) to visit the 'Royal' and perform surgery on a number of very difficult patients. Since then, Prof Vancaillie has operated on six more patients with very good outcomes. The pain is rarely completely resolved, as pudendal nerve entrapment is a progressively worsening condition, but to obtain stabilization of the symptoms is considered an enormous plus for the sufferer.

Prior to the surgery Sally was dependent on significant doses of pain medication and the majority of her time was spent in bed. Today, Sally feels like a new woman thanks to the extraordinary work of Prof Vancaillie and his team.

Currently, the 'Royal' is the only hospital in the Southern Hemisphere that performs this very remarkable surgery.

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