



ONE WOMAN'S MISSION TO BE BELIEVED TAKES HER FIGHT TO WESTMINSTER

A university student will speak at Westminster in a bid to increase awareness of a rare condition which causes severe pain in both legs, despite being told by doctors that it is 'all in her head'.

"The lift has given me my independence back"



Helena Stone from Islington has become unofficial spokesperson for sufferers of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) – a condition usually triggered by injury. The skin of the affected area can become so sensitive that a mere droplet of water, a change in temperature, even a gentle breeze, can cause intense pain.

Helena was diagnosed with CRPS just over three years ago after a kayaking accident. A recent flare-up of the condition resulted in admission to Cheltenham General Hospital where doctors refused to acknowledge there was anything wrong with her. This made her determined to raise the profile of CRPS.

Helena said: "They didn't believe me! I told them how much pain I was in but they didn't know what CRPS was! I was told my condition was psychological; despite the physical symptoms.

"When this happens you start to question whether you're going mad. When doctors say 'you can't be in that much pain', it's soul-destroying."

Helena was once an aspiring Olympic-level kayaker. It was during her first national race in Wales that the boat capsized, and her foot was caught.

She was on crutches for two weeks and expected to recover fully, but her leg and foot remained in persistent pain. She was in and out hospital for most of 2014 and diagnosed with CRPS after a follow-up steroid injection caused her knee to become inflamed. Worse was to come as pain and swelling spread to her other leg too. Despite excruciating pain, Helena managed to pass her A-levels and received an offer from Loughborough University.

Soon after starting though, her condition worsened and she was forced to drop out.



Bed-bound for most of 2016 Helena had to be helped up and down the stairs by her parents, Patricia and Graham. Distraught and helpless by their daughter's deteriorating condition, the Stone's installed a Stiltz Homelift to help Helena move from floor to floor with some degree of independence.

The lift took just a day to install and travelling directly up to her bedroom from the ground floor games room. "It's made the house safe again and it's given me my independence back."



When my CRPS was really bad, I was bed-bound. Sometimes I'd have to wait for Mum or Dad to get back from work to help me downstairs."

Gradually, through intensive physiotherapy, pain medications and with the help of crutches, Helena is finding a way learn to live with the constant pain.

At the end of 2016, she gave higher education another shot and was accepted to study Education at the University of Gloucestershire. After her experience at Cheltenham General Hospital, she contacted local MP Alex Chalk, who has paved the way for her to speak at Westminster.

Helena explained: "The longer I have CRPS, the less the chance of remission. It is the most painful condition known to medicine and there is no cure.

There's no money spent on research because the total number of sufferers are unknown and therefore spend cannot be justified. I want to raise awareness of CRPS so the funding for research to free sufferers from this dreadful condition can start."

"The Stiltz Homelift has been a life-saver as I just felt trapped. It has made the house safe again".



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