

N T Anderson,
PO Box 9,
Meremere Village, 1873.
Phone: 09-2336160
Mobile: 027-239-5939
SMS: 021-2060-567
Email: norm@nz09.net
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Mr Hood has asked me to describe the treatment I received for my hand injury while under ACC care as well as my impressions of all of the providers treatment I had received. He asked me also to send it on to the people asking for submissions on ACC's treatment of its clients and their performance. I have done that too, and here it is.

I duly authorize him to pass these details onto whoever he feels it is appropriate to, and also to use any notes, reports and correspondence he has pertaining to the treatment he provided me.

During May 1998 I suffered a serious workshop accident where I cut off my left hand (my dominant hand).

My Wife and a family friend rushed me to Middlemore Hospital where a Mr Peat and his team replaced my hand in a 21 hour operation.

Subsequently I was assessed by several specialists there and warned that I may loose my hand in spite of all the work the surgical team had done. The very BEST I could look forwards to, was having 20% - 25% of the original strength and use of my hand but most likely only 10% of the original dexterity. This possibility I totally rejected, claiming I would regain, most, if not all use of my hand.

I was visited by several of the Hospital Psychiatrists, as they considered me to be in denial, and tried their best to convince my family and myself to accept specialists opinions, (totally without any success I must add).

During the following year I underwent 5 further operations on my hand, to remove pins, clips and wires as well as to have ligaments attached to my thumb to help movement. While still in Hospital I began a grueling Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Program, but because of the staff shortages and the increasing workload in the Hospital Physiotherapy Staff, I soon began receiving less and less treatment and support.

The treatment and service I received while under hospital care was in my opinion first rate and all the health professionals and staff showed integrity, care and great interest in their jobs. The problem was that they seemed to be totally and woefully under staffed and resourced.

There always seemed to be three times as many patients that the Physiotherapists had time to attend to, and I know I was not the only patient to suffer this sort of unintended neglect which resulting in so much increasingly, excessive and unnecessary pain and suffering.

A.C.C were in no way helpful at all as they seemed to only concentrate on finding fault with everything and everyone involved with my treatment.

There were no offers of victim support, home support or in fact, support in any form what so ever, nor did they offer information on where I could go to get help, they made no attempt to find how I was adjusting or coping with my disability either. This all took a serious toll on the well being my whole Family as well as the terrible effect the injury had on me.

I was traveling to Middlemore Hospital for Therapy daily now and as I had suffered a Pulmonary Embolism after my first operation, I had to be monitored 3 times a week with blood tests for the anti-clotting agent "Warfarin" in my system so the dosage could be adjusted accordingly. I also had a huge open wound on my right foot that was caused by a chemical burn from an IV line that had been put there during my re-attachment operation that I had to have treatment on and the dressings had to be changed daily.

Initially a District health nurse had been doing this but Mr Peat the Surgeon who was caring for me was not satisfied with the way she was treating the wound and stopped that, he then arranged for me to have the wound “Debrided” and dressed by my GP in Pukekohe. I did my very best to make sure all of my appointments with my GP, the “Med-Lab” who done my “Warfarin” testing and eventually my Physiotherapy, appointments all fell close together. This saved my family the trouble of driving me different places on different days and saved ACC travel allowance money.

After about six months it was obvious to everyone that the condition of my hand was becoming serious, the circulation seemed to be failing, the pain had become constant and was steadily getting worse. My range of movement was continually decreasing in spite of my attending clinic, now down from daily attendance to only 3 then finally 2 times a week in Middlemore Hospital, and doing all the exercises and tasks assigned by the Physiotherapists. These Clinics were “Self Help Clinics” where you went in, used their Equipment and then went home. The actual appointments with the Physiotherapist were only every 4 – 6 weeks, and they could and were often cancelled by a patient coming down from one of the wards, needing urgent therapy.

I was by then, taking an increasing amounts of painkillers, anti-inflammatory pills, anti-depressants, sleeping pills so the situation was becoming very serious, with my family refusing to allow me to drive, or to remain alone at any time. I was totally unaware of their concerns, or the stress the whole situation was placing on my loved ones.

During June 1999 the Law was changed allowing patients to seek private Physiotherapy treatment instead of crowding into Hospital departments.

My G.P. Dr John Allan, recommended Malcolm Hood, of Hood’s Physiotherapy in Pukekohe, (with the warning that he is one of NZ’s best Sport Physio’s and is a “No Sympathy, No Nonsense Physio”, but, if I could be helped, then he was the one to do it).

Mr Hood preformed the initial assessment, contacted ACC for verification and then agreed to treat me.

His only conditions were, that I cooperate fully and take an active part in the treatment, I wholeheartedly agreed to this, and we started the program that eventually restored my hand to approx 90% of its original use.

Malcolm Hoods initial assessment was that my hand was in the last stages of “Severe Under-use Syndrome.” Circulation was almost halted, and any physical contact with my hand and wrist resulted in acute agony and bruising. I was suffering Severe Pain at all times, had no practical use of my hand at all, and I was in fact, in his expert opinion, under imminent threat of loosing my hand altogether.

We started a new regime of physiotherapy, exercises including my cutting down on my medication, with the intention of ceasing the use all together as soon as possible.

Within a month the pain had decreased to a manageable level, and my hand’s, range of movement had increased markedly. Strength exercises were also part of the program, and involved strengthening the whole body. I was not at all sure of the merits of this thinking at first, but went along with it, as everything else he had done seemed to be working out just as he said it would.

BUT:

1/ A.C.C continually Re-Assessed me and I was interviewed and Re-Assessed by a different specialist almost every two or three months.

2/ My treatment by Mr Hood was stopped several times without warning by ACC, and I was sent several times to other Physiotherapists and to a couple of Hand therapists.

3/ Each time after about a month when the condition of my hand and its use progressively deteriorated, they all recommended that I be returned to the care and treatment of Mr Hood. This was particularly frustrating and distressing, as we basically had to start all over again.

4/ Eventually my hand got to a stage where the improvement slowed and eventually stopped.

5/ The final assessment by Mr Hood was that I had regained 85% to 90% of the original strength and use of my left hand, although my dexterity was somewhat less.

6/ I was also then assessed by two other Specialists hired by the A.C.C, why I do not know, perhaps they mistrusted Mr Hoods recommendation that he could do no more for me?

While I will never regain the dexterity, sensitivity and suppleness my left hand had originally enjoyed, I am now a reasonably clumsy right hander, and about the same with my left hand.

Looking back now, I am able to assess the treatment I received by Malcolm Hood and compare his treatment with all the other Therapy Providers I had experienced, both in the Public and Private sector.

Malcolm Hood , with his wide experience in Sports Medicine and Injuries, and his wealth of knowledge in this field, is quicker to realize where a certain method of therapy is not working to its optimum ability. He is able to alter and vary the treatment to suit the conditions much earlier.

His friendly, open, honest and uncompromising attitude is contagious, and he strengthens patients resolve to heal.

I know for a fact that it was the intervention of, and treatment by Malcolm Hood, that restore the use of my hand, preserving my sanity and most likely my life too as I had begun the trip down slippery path of, self pity, depression and increasing drug dependency.

I am only one of many Patients who have had the fortune to be treated by this man.

The treatment I received from Malcolm Hood covered a period of more than a year which I know far exceeds the standard time limit imposed by ACC to repair a broken body. They seemed to me to have either, no idea or no intention of using the process of consultation with medical providers.

The number of "Specialist Consultants" involved in my case seemed to me to be excessive to the point of ridiculous. The cost of these services must have exceeded the cost of my Physiotherapy by many times, if my understanding of the fees charges by Specialists is any where correct.

ACC's arbitrarily ceasing support for my treatment and insisting on Specialist reports before continuing, interrupted it at critical points several times during the process and put the final date of cessation back quite a bit, as well as causing more unnecessary pain and suffering to me.

Eventually I was told by ACC that I would be moved from being an ACC beneficiary to the care of WINZ where I would go on the "Unemployment Benefit". This seemed to be a good idea at the time but I know now that it was not a good option for me and was most likely just used to get me to accept transfer from ACC to WINZ care without any fuss or argument.

1/ I was never told that I had the option of asking for a review of this process or asking for any other help and assistance at all.

2/ I was not aware that there were both government sponsored as well as private organizations that helped beneficiaries sort out and solve problems like this.

As I have already stated we had no help, support or consultation apart from ACC doing what ever it could to interrupt treatment or dismiss us from their care.

3/ I was offered to apply for a scheme where WINZ funded some people to start their own business up.

4/ I had always been keen on Photo Restoration and had become very good at it although had not considered becoming a professional.

5/ consultations between ACC, WINZ and Footbridge who would monitor my work trial went ahead, and I was given a definite date where ACC would discard me.

6/ the "Work Trials" were a bit of a farce as the only place that would give me the opportunity to show what I could do was planning to offer the same service and were not real keen to have me start up in competition. Therefore the work only involved 4-5 hours of actual work and not the required two 40 hr weeks to show that I was capable of working that amount of time to be able to support myself and justify the WINZ sponsored "Business Start Up Loan".

7/ the hours I had actually done were somehow juggled to fit the requirements

8/ I attended a "Business Startup" course in Pukekohe to learn how to run your own business, manage Tax and GST, and general business practices from marketing to legal requirements.

9/ A Business Plan was formulated and submitted to WINZ for them to have it appraised by an "Independent Consultant".

10/ My application for the loan was granted and we were assigned a WINZ case worker to help us through the transition period of three months.

11/ ACC eventually come up with the proper "Ergonomic Office Furniture".

12/ The loan paid for some of the required computer equipment and software to get me started. We borrowed money from family members, the bank and we maxed out our Visa card to get the rest of the equipment and supplies we needed, as well as to pay for some advertising of our new service.

13/ We were duly transferred to the care of WINZ and ACC washed their hands of me and my problems.

14/ Once we were on our own and supposedly set up in our new business we were practically abandoned. Consultations with our "WINZ Caseworker/Mentor" offered no help, advice or assistance at all and the slow but sure signs that our business was failing seemed no surprise at all to them either. It now seems to me that the whole process of evaluating the business opportunities was just as flawed as the "Work Trial" was.

15/ The business struggled on for 8-9 months more and while I had a few customers who were all extremely pleased with the results of my work, there was just not enough work out there for us to survive on.

16/ Four or five times during this whole sorry event we had to go to WINZ for "Food Vouchers" as we couldn't afford food. Family members and friends helped where they could but could not afford to support us continually.

17/ Eventually we had to give up and go back to WINZ for help.

18/ From then onwards I slowly progressed from the Unemployment Benefit to the Invalids and from there to the Disability Benefit, where I am still today.

19/ The loans we had taken out were eventually all paid off and we did it particularly hard doing that, but I felt that the option of declaring bankruptcy was not a honorable option.

My hand has never improved from its condition while I was under Mr Hoods care and has in fact regressed quite a bit since then. I suffer almost constant pain in my left hand now, a lot of tenderness and cramping as well in spite of attempting to use it all the time. I am on medication for this but try to keep that use down as much as possible.