

## Giving Back Control: How the Addition of an Eleganza 5 Bed to the Dolphin Therapy Surface Helped a Patient's Engagement with Care and Recovery

- ↑ Pressure ulcers healing
- ↑ Improved adherence to care
- ↑ Medically fit for discharge

### Introduction

Lee\* (age 48) was admitted to hospital from home following a heroin overdose. He was a long-term drug user, and in general poor health.

His past and current medical history included:

- Current drug abuse
- Previous alcohol abuse
- Liver disease
- Long-term suprapubic catheter
- Paraplegia following a road traffic collision

On admission to hospital, he had multiple areas of skin damage, acquired in the community. These included Category 4 pressure ulcers to his sacrum and left heel, a Category 2 pressure ulcer to his right heel and a DTI to his right buttock.

*\*Lee is not the patient's real name*

### Clinical Challenges

Lee was very angry on admission to hospital. He was commenced on methadone to reduce heroin withdrawal symptoms. He didn't want to be in hospital, but knew he couldn't self-discharge as he wasn't well enough.

He already had significant skin damage, but was at high risk of further deterioration. This risk was compounded by his paraplegia, which had resulted in him being unable to feel anything from the waist down.

When Lee went to the ward, he was refusing care, shouting out and sometimes screaming with frustration whenever personal care or repositioning were suggested. As well as increasing the risk of further skin damage, the risk of developing a urinary tract infection was also increased, as the only catheter care he was allowing was emptying the bag.

The staff thought the reason for Lee's challenging behaviour was the complete loss of control he was feeling. He had gone from being largely independent at home to needing all care, and the only thing he now felt he could have some control over was his care.



## Patient Objectives

- **Treat existing skin damage**
- **Prevent further skin breakdown**
- **Improve adherence to care**
- **Increase independence**
- **Achieve 'medically fit for discharge' status**

## Introduction of the Dolphin Therapy Fluid Immersion Simulation Support Surface, then the Eleganza 5 Bed

When Lee was admitted to the ward, he was placed on a traditional alternating therapy mattress. However, it became quickly apparent that Lee was at extremely high risk of further skin deterioration. Therefore, the TVN decided a 'step up' to a Dolphin Therapy surface was necessary, and Lee agreed to this when the reasons were explained to him.

Dolphin Therapy is a unique reactive support surface that simulates a fluid environment. Currently, immersion (fluid simulation/air fluidised) is one of the only viable 'step up' options from a dynamic air mattress. Originally developed by the United States Navy to keep dolphins buoyant and healthy during extended periods out-of-water, it provides immersion and envelopment of the patient. This helps to maintain tissue symmetry,<sup>1</sup> maximise the contact surface area and minimise pressure. In turn, this minimises vascular occlusion<sup>2</sup> and helps to prevent tissue ischaemia, even when the wound is directly in contact with the surface.<sup>3</sup>

Data collected from over 3,000 patients nursed on Dolphin Therapy has demonstrated that it is extremely effective at treatment of skin damage, with 58% of wounds healed or improved at the end of placement.<sup>4</sup>

The Dolphin Therapy surface maintained Lee's wounds at a static level, with no deterioration. However, he was still largely non-adherent to care. On visiting the ward, Medstrom's Clinical Advisor found out about the challenges that Lee and the staff were experiencing, and suggested that an Eleganza 5 bed may help.

Eleganza 5 is a specialist bed, often used in intensive care. However, it can also be of great benefit to general ward patients such as Lee who have complex needs.

The bed has full platform electrically operated lateral tilt, up to 15° to both the left and right. It can also be moved to lower angles of tilt (approximately 5° to 7°) by one person, which helps to off-load and redistribute pressure. This helps to reduce the amount of physical repositioning required.

Medstrom's Clinical Advisor suggested that Lee could be shown how to tilt the bed laterally himself, using the hand-held control. He would then gain an element of control back as he'd be able to reposition himself. In turn, this would help with wound off-loading.

Giving Lee the control to use himself would be subject to dynamic risk assessment, but in principle the Ward Manager thought it could work. Lee was enthusiastic about the idea when asked, so an Eleganza 5 bed was installed with the Dolphin Therapy surface.

Medstrom's Clinical Advisor ensured that both Lee and the ward staff knew how to tilt the bed, and that if he was moving it on his own, to not go any further than 7°.

This relatively simple change had an extremely positive effect on Lee. He became much more engaged, less angry, and more adherent to care. He became adept at turning and repositioning himself, and, as he continued to improve, to move the bed into other positions.



## Summary

The Dolphin Therapy surface was the best solution for Lee when he was admitted to the ward, due to the extent of skin damage he had already, and the risk of further deterioration. However, it didn't solve the problem of him feeling like he had no control over anything.

The addition of the Eleganza 5 bed was a pivotal point in Lee's engagement and subsequent recovery. By moving himself, he was off-loading pressure and also having a say in, and more control over his care.

Evidence shows large improvements are made when patients are actively involved in their care,<sup>5,6</sup> including:

- Safety
- Patient satisfaction
- Adherence to care
- Health outcomes

This was certainly the case for Lee and he continued to improve. All objectives for him had been met; his wounds were all improving, with no new skin breakdown. He was much more adherent to care, and was now more independent, getting out of bed and into his wheelchair. Two months later, he was deemed medically fit for discharge and went home with community support.



**Skin improving**



**Independence improved**



**Discharged home**

## References

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**To discover more about Dolphin Therapy, Eleganza 5, and how Medstrom can support you, contact our Clinical Advisors 24/7/365 on:**

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