

CASE STUDY – Australia’s Younger Polio Survivors

Ms S is a 24 yo Sri Lankan-born polio survivor who migrated to Australia with her family at the age of 1 ½. She contracted polio at 3 months of age.

Ms S is one of 150 polio survivors under the age of 30 who regularly see Orthotist, Darren Pereira, at his private practice, NeuroMuscular Orthotics in Mt Waverly. People choose to see Darren because he specialises in working with polio survivors.

Ms S increasingly relies on a motorized wheelchair for mobility but is also seeing Darren to have \$3,000 Stance Control KAFO’s (knee, ankle, foot orthosis) made up.

Ms S studied Accounting at University but is currently working as a call centre operator.

Her main issues are:

1. the high costs involved in having quarterly assessments for her orthotics (no private health insurance to claim on)
2. having to pay gap fees for costs of the KAFO’s and other mobility equipment
3. time it takes to authorize payment for new/replacement mobility equipment, eg. Ms S had a scooter which kept breaking down, leaving her in a range of difficult situations and severely limiting her ability to participate in the community, but there was a lengthy wait before payment was authorized. The only option is to pay for the equipment herself, which cannot be claimed retrospectively.
4. lack of accessibility to potential workplaces limiting employment options
5. lack of accessibility to social venues
6. uncertainty about what will happen in the long term, will her condition get worse?
7. on line support for younger polio survivors would be very beneficial

General issues for younger polio survivors:

Experience with Younger Patients in a Post-Polio Clinic: A Case Series

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year	# of patients <50 years	Total # of patients seen	%
2006	4	81	4.9
2007	5	115	4.3
2008	11	87	12.6
2009	8	113	7.1
2010	15	160	9.4

- Conclusions drawn:
 - In contrast to older patients seen in the clinic who typically contracted polio during the mid-20th century epidemics in this country, the younger group had polio as infants in developing countries and then immigrated here as teens or adults.
 - Not surprisingly, they found that both the younger and older patients have similar complaints of late affects of polio: new weakness, pain and fatigue.
 - In contrast to the typical older patient, the younger polio survivors present a different and challenging mix of issues such as schooling, demands of work and raising a family.