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Press Release

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ActiGait® - For More Active Everyday Life Bad Wildungen: First implantations in Germany

Karl Papp (53) was taken by surprise a few hours after the end of his night shift: “The stroke changed my whole life.” Now, the man from Nuremberg and the Cologne resident Frank Menzel (40) are the first patients to be fitted with the ActiGait® Neuroimplant as part of the market introduction by medical technology company Otto Bock HealthCare.

ActiGait® is a therapy option for stroke patients suffering from weak foot dorsiflexion. In the Papp and Menzel cases, the minor procedure only took 45 minutes each. The procedure was completed on April 27, 2007, by the assistant professor Dr. Thomas Meiners, one of the leading global experts in the field of functional electrostimulation and head physician at the Werner-Wicker clinic in Bad Wildungen: “ActiGait® could represent an alternative to orthopedic footwear and braces.”

ActiGait® uses intact nerve tracts in the leg suffering from weak foot dorsiflexion; these nerve tracts are still fundamentally able to activate the dorsiflexion musculature. However, muscle control by the central nervous system is often impaired after a stroke. The neuroimplant assumes the stimulus transmission function; it is activated by an inconspicuous device worn on the hip. A pulse emitter on the heel is used to determine the right moment for the contraction of the dorsiflexion musculature within the gait cycle.

Even during the clinical test phase, scientific studies showed that ActiGait® significantly improves the patient’s ability to walk. The results of studies carried out in three Danish clinics were published in the April 2007 edition of the internationally recognized Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine (author Jane Burridge et al., pages 212 to 218). The patients in the Danish study reported enhanced safety and increased confidence in their own ability to walk. The experiences with the additional implantations and the success of the therapy during the market introduction will be evaluated extensively. Therefore the therapeutic progress of Karl Papp und Frank Menzel will be monitored closely. The improvement in their ability to walk will continue to be verified months after the implantations.



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Dr. Andreas Hahn, manager of the neurostimulation business area at Otto Bock HealthCare: "In neurostimulation, we are developing innovative medical technologies to improve the rehabilitation and mobilization of patients who have suffered a stroke and other neurological disorders." The purpose of further tests and questionnaires is to evaluate the opportunities provided by ActiGait® in greater detail, more reliably, and in relation to the patient's individual situation. After all, the expectations of people – whose everyday lives may be severely affected after suffering a stroke and weak foot dorsiflexion – are high. Karl Papp had to completely rearrange his life, but he would like to regain enough of his ability to walk so that he can resume his function on the sports field as the coach of a soccer team. And Frank Menzel, who suffered a stroke as a result of a blocked carotid artery, says that he would "like to be able to run through the woods and walk cross-country once again".

Strokes are considered a disease of civilization which will affect more and more people around the world. On the one hand, this is the result of demographic changes with a steadily increasing number of older people; on the other hand, people who are significantly younger than 60 – the age when the risk of stroke increases statistically – are increasingly being affected as well.

For Otto Bock HealthCare, the global market leader in the prosthetics field and renowned manufacturer of orthoses, wheelchairs, and other rehabilitation products, this was reason enough to enter a whole new business area with the development of functional electrostimulation and neuroimplant products. Professor Hans Georg Näder, managing shareholder of the Otto Bock Group, is convinced that "Obtaining CE certification for the European market in September 2006 represents another milestone in the history of our technologies for people".

Additional information:

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