

## **COPING WITH CHRONIC PAIN:**

Chronic pain can be a Doug Moore's (local Physiotherapist) sister-in-law Emma Gee was only 24 years old when she suffered a stroke after undergoing brain surgery to treat a congenital AVM (arteriovenous malformation) diagnosed in 2005. Emma was an Occupational Therapist working in Melbourne with stroke survivors during their rehabilitation.

*Two years later I have regained the ability to speak and swallow and although face huge mobility, sensory, balance and pain issues, have now begun to accept the longevity of my chronic conditions.*

*Managing chronic pain when it can't be physically seen is extremely challenging. Medication no longer masks the aches and I can't 'bandaid' the hot graze feeling I now encounter. However, I've learnt the red flags like tiredness, becoming sedentary and changing temperatures that exacerbate my pain levels.*

### **Tips that I find help my Chronic Pain:**

**Regular exercise:** *As I no longer can run with my balance problems I swim regularly instead. This not only reduces my joint stiffness and muscle aches but also distracts me from my ongoing pain.*

**Treatment:** *Regular physio sessions ensure that my headaches or back pain don't exacerbate my pain.*

**Compensate:** *Learn the factors that exacerbate your pain. For me, I wear gloves and beanies to bed to ensure I*

*stay warm and always follow a heavy task (swimming) by a lighter one (reading) to prevent getting too tired.*

**Acknowledgement:** *By acknowledging that I can function despite my pain I control it rather than let it run my day. Knowing also that you'll have 'good' days and 'bad' days and that's ok. Take each day at a time.*

**Acceptance:** *I daily remind myself that this pain will not heal with time. Instead, I realise that it's a condition that I have to manage. I've also found it vital to remember that my pain is not visible to others, so it's important for me to clearly communicate my varying abilities.*

**Emotional Management:** *The impact of dealing with a chronic illness can become very emotionally overwhelming. It is really important to manage this as chronic pain can lead to depression and other emotional conditions. I have found it helpful to debrief with others and health professionals about how I am going. Carrying out my normal daily activities and s*

**Occupations:** *I have found there are many activities I no longer can do. For example, writing only heightens my pain so I now type instead. Distracting yourself by engaging in daily activities you can still do, I've found vital in managing your own pain.*

*Overall, having a chronic condition is not cureable but by engaging in meaningful occupations and preventing/ managing both physical*

*and emotional symptoms, you can take control of it!*