



# Health Bulletin



## Hope After Stroke: Ricky Meek's Story

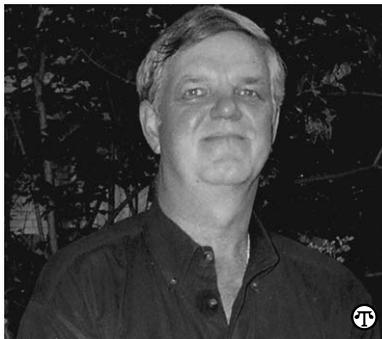
(NAPSA)—Each year, approximately 700,000 Americans suffer a new or recurrent stroke. On average, stroke occurs every 45 seconds, changing lives—like Ricky Meek's—forever.

While at work one afternoon in April 1998 at the gas station he owns, Ricky called his wife and told her his equilibrium was off. She noticed Ricky's language was slurred, and then the telephone fell to the floor. A stroke sent Ricky into an unconscious state for the next five weeks. When he finally did regain consciousness, his mind was fuzzy and he could not talk. He had no control over his right side and could not walk.

Intensive speech, occupational and physical therapy followed for the next five months. Ricky regained much of what he had lost and again was able to speak and walk. However, severe spasticity emerged in his right leg. Spasticity is tight muscles that make movement of the arms or legs difficult, and everyday activities like dressing or eating almost impossible. A study published in the 2002 issue of *Clinical Rehabilitation* that focused on stroke victims one year after their experience found that 38 percent had developed spasticity.

### **ITB Therapy<sup>SM</sup> to Control Severe Spasticity**

At the suggestion of his doctor, Ricky underwent a preliminary screening test for ITB Therapy<sup>SM</sup>



**Ricky Meek experienced a stroke in 1998. He now uses ITB Therapy to manage his severe spasticity.**

(Intrathecal Baclofen Therapy) in February 2001 to determine if the therapy could control his spasticity. The test was successful, and Ricky began receiving ITB Therapy that same month.

ITB Therapy from Minneapolis-based Medtronic involves the surgical placement of a programmable pump implanted under the skin of the abdomen. The pump is connected to a catheter to deliver precisely controlled doses of a medication called Lioresal<sup>®</sup> Intrathecal (baclofen injection) to the intrathecal space where fluid flows around the spinal cord. Because the drug is delivered directly to the spinal fluid, it relieves spasticity with small amounts of medication.

"At first I thought ITB Therapy was going to do something for me. Then I realized it allowed me to

do things for myself," recalls Ricky. "Helping customers fill up with gas, cleaning their windshields, checking air pressures and oil...all of it was possible with the help of the pump."

Ricky's surgery was successful and only minor side effects followed. Immediately after the surgery he had difficulty with his bladder. A simple adjustment of the baclofen dosage resolved the problem. When he returned home, a persistent headache emerged. At a follow-up visit the dosage was again adjusted and the headache disappeared.

### **Ricky's New Freedom**

ITB Therapy has given Ricky more control over his right arm and leg, more than he ever thought possible. "When I cook, I can open jars and hold ingredients in my right hand. I can walk up stairs to my second-floor apartment. I can work part time at the gas station," he says. "I have come so far. And with this freedom, I have a better frame of mind."

While ITB Therapy is helping Ricky do things for himself, it also is helping him do things for others. "If my story prompts just one person to have their blood pressure checked, then my experience with stroke and spasticity has been worth it."

For more information on spasticity and ITB Therapy, call Medtronic at (800) 856-3823, extension 103 or visit [www.yourlifeafterstroke.com](http://www.yourlifeafterstroke.com).