

Paralyzed From The Chest Down, Triathlete Takes Second In The Handcycle Division Of The Ford Ironman World Championship

(NAPSA)—Crossing the finish line in second place at the 2008 Ford Ironman Triathlon World Championship is a dream that almost didn't come true for 34-year-old Jason Fowler, who was one of five wheelchair qualifiers. Fowler completed the triathlon, which involved a 2.4-mile swim in the Pacific Ocean using only his arms, a 112-mile bike ride through lava fields using a handcycle and a 26.2-mile run that Fowler completed in a racing wheelchair in 90-degree heat.

"I wanted to push myself to the max and I figured the Ironman championship is the biggest challenge of all," said Fowler. "My goal was to finish the race. Placing second in my division was really icing on the cake."

An athlete all his life, Fowler's competitive career nearly came to a halt when he was involved in a motocross training run at age 17. Fowler struck a rock with his motorcycle and landed on his head, severing his spinal cord and leaving him paralyzed below the chest.

In addition to losing use of his lower body, he suffered from severe spasticity and painful muscle spasms in his back and legs. His spasms were so severe that he would be thrown backward out of his wheelchair and even dislocated his hip. After consulting with a neurosurgeon about his treatment options and undergoing



Ironman triathlete Jason Fowler

screening and dosing tests, Fowler opted for a surgical procedure to receive Medtronic ITB TherapySM (Intrathecal Baclofen Therapy) in December 1991 as part of a clinical study.

ITB Therapy delivers a liquid form of baclofen, a medication that treats severe spasticity, through a programmable pump that is surgically placed under the skin of the abdomen. The pump is connected to a small, flexible catheter that delivers medication directly into the intrathecal space where fluid flows around the spinal cord.

Following the surgery, Fowler's spasms and spasticity decreased drastically. His leg and back muscles relaxed and he regained control of his body.

"The device has worked tremendously for me," Fowler said. "With my spasms under control, I was able to do everyday things more easily and I was also able to

start training and competing again."

After his motorcycle accident, Fowler became a member of the wheelchair racing team at the University of Illinois. Competing on his college team reignited Jason's passion and soon he was setting his sights on increasingly difficult feats. To date, he has competed in 140 road races, 29 marathons and 19 triathlons, including the Ironman World Championship. He completed the 2008 Ironman World Championship in 11:29:52 as the fastest American in the handcycle division.

Fowler's athletic achievements are not representative of the typical ITB TherapySM (Intrathecal Baclofen Therapy) experience. However, his story is inspirational. He is one extraordinary individual who was able to reach a personal goal through the help of this therapy. As you read about it, please bear in mind the athletic achievements are specific to this particular individual and are not representative of the typical ITB Therapy patient. As with all therapies, results may vary, and this therapy may not be for you. Talk to your doctor.



To learn more about spasticity caused by spinal cord injury, as well as ITB Therapy, visit www.medtronic.com/your-health/spinal-cord-injury-disease/index.htm. You can also read more of Fowler's story by visiting www.medtronic.com/ironman.