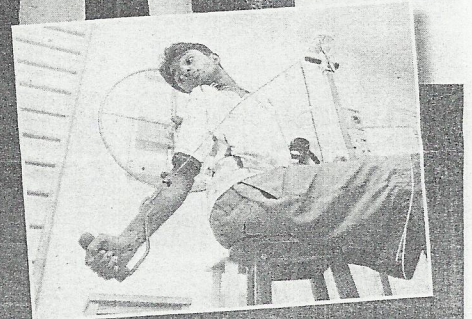


Ramesh (left) supervises Thirupathi while Wee looks on.

## Finnish therapy for back pain

**ANNIE FREEDA CRUEZ** writes about a non-invasive treatment for scoliosis and musculoskeletal disorders.



**F**OR years Thirupathi Rao woke up from sleep feeling excruciating pain in his back.

His movements were limited and each time he embarked on doing something, including playing games, it left him tired and having to endure severe back and body pain.

It was only when he was 11 years old that the truth of his condition was revealed. A team of medical students came to his school. Upon close examination, they found that he had severe scoliosis, an abnormal lateral curvature of the spine.

Thirupathi's parents took him to see an orthopaedic surgeon who recommended corrective surgery which will cost about RM20,000.

"My parents could not raise the money and we had to seek public donation," said Thirupathi, who is now 17 and studying at SMK Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya. His father works as a labourer while his mother is a kindergarten teacher. They have two other school-going children.

Documented Based Care (DBC) chief executive officer Wee Hock Kee, who read about Thirupathi's plight in a local daily, offered him a pre-operation rehabilitation programme that helps prevent his condition from worsening.

DBC International is a global leader in musculoskeletal rehabilitation for the past 10 years. The Human Resources Ministry has also engaged its services for the Social Security Organisation (Socso)'s Return to Work programme.

DBC Active Rehabilitation rehabilitation programmes are based on knowledge and technology.

The programme was researched and developed in Finland and is designed for the non-invasive treatment of prolonged, recurrent back and neck pain. It does not use drugs, injections or bone manipulation.

Thirupathi visited DBC Taman Tun Dr Ismail branch in Kuala Lumpur with his father.

A baseline assessment done by DBC chief physiotherapist, Ramesh Babu, revealed that the scoliosis on the lower back was secondary due thoracic and cervical scoliosis.

Thirupathi needed to undergo DBC muscle reconditioning for his lower back which can reduce his pain intensity, back trouble severity and increase his functional abilities.

Thirupathi started his first of 12 sessions of treatment in July and upon completion, the Form Five student found that the pain he has endured for almost 15 years

had reduced by 95 per cent. He is now able to play football with better body flexibility.

"I feel so much better and suffer less pain when I wake up in the morning," said Thirupathi, adding that he would continue with his exercise until he feels even better.

Wee said Thirupathi responded well with the exercises on the advanced DBC machine for his spinal rotation and spinal side bending.

"He takes his rehabilitation programme seriously, has a positive mind and is determined to succeed in his endeavour. That is why he has made tremendous progress over the past four months," added Wee.

The Finnish therapy, technology and treatment protocol in DBC varies from six, 12 or 24 weeks with two sessions weekly and provides exercise programmes for back, neck, shoulder and knee problems. A patient has to go through a baseline assessment test to enable a physiotherapist to assess his back problem and its severity.

Each session lasts between 60 and 90 minutes and before the final session, another assessment will be done to evaluate the result.

During each session, patients

go through a series of exercise programmes designed to address the condition and will be guided by the physiotherapist.

"We teach patients to care for their back and give them home exercises that can help them improve their condition even faster."

DBC has more than 13 years of experience in treating neck, back and shoulder problems. It has outlets in over 22 countries and has treated more than 2,000 patients in Malaysia to date.

About 80 per cent of people will experience a significant bout of low back pain at some point during their lifetime. Many will have several episodes of significant back pain, and some will go on to develop back pain that bothers them daily. Most back pain develops suddenly after lifting a heavy object or spraining the muscles in the back during vigorous exercise.

Another common cause of back pain is poor posture at work or during prolonged periods of sitting.

"This type of back pain is often the result of the muscles that support the spinal column becoming weaker over time."

Doctors refer to this type of weakness as "deconditioning", which describes the body's

natural response to inactivity and little exercise. As the muscles that support the spine and trunk become weaker, they are less able to withstand heavy lifting, or support the spine in its normal position, and as a result, the entire back becomes sore and tired.

Exercise is the best way to prevent this type of pain.

DBC, which started its rehabilitation programme eight years ago, has four centres in Peninsular Malaysia and plans to open another four this year in Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Johor and Penang.

"We have spent almost RM4 million to set up the four centres and most of our clients are those with skeletal problems."

Commenting on Socso's Return to Work programme, Wee said the programme, which was launched in 2005, has successfully treated 500 Socso patients nationwide and almost all have returned to work.

DBC Active Rehabilitation has three centres in the Klang Valley. For more information, call 03-2166-2195/2166-3195 (Ampwalk, Jalan Ampang), 03-7710-6034 (Taman Tun Dr Ismail) and 03-3344-3853 (Bukit Kuda, Klang) or visit [www.dbc.fi](http://www.dbc.fi).

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