

# LIFESTYLE

## Miracle glove gives stroke victims hope

**W**HEN Romford woman Judy Ramsay suffered a stroke three years ago she was suddenly left unable to walk, speak properly or perform the simplest tasks.

The 55-year-old mum-of-five had been fit and active until one morning when she woke up to find the whole of her right side paralysed.

Now, thanks to a revolutionary device, Judy is able to use her right hand again and has returned to her job with British Telecom.

The device is called SaëboFlex and looks like a glove with springs attached. It works by helping stroke sufferers to open and close their fingers – an action they usually are unable to perform. The device was invented in America and has been introduced in the UK by Glyn Blakey, a Hertfordshire-based physiotherapist.

Judy, who lives in Birch Close, said: "The transformation has been amazing. It's had such a dramatic improvement on my situation."

The night before Judy had her stroke, in December 2001, she had been out enjoying a meal with friends. She had no idea that anything was wrong with her until she woke the next morning at 6.30am and found she was unable to move.

### Terrified

She said: "It was really scary. The whole of the right side of my body felt as if a tonne weight was pushing it down. I tried to speak but my voice came out all croaky. I knew what had happened because I was a first aider, but I was still terrified."

Judy, who has six grandchildren, had suffered a bleed to the back of her head which was too dangerous to operate on at first. The next 24 hours were critical as doctors waited for the bleed to stop.

But Judy pulled through and then had to spend the next three months in Harold Wood Hospital



● Judy Ramsay practises using the SaëboFlex device with physiotherapist Glyn Blakey.



By LIZ ALVIS

where she received physiotherapy to help her learn to walk again.

She said: "It was such a shock because I was a very active person and I used to go to the gym three or four times a week. At first I felt like I was living a nightmare. There were quite a few tears. But after a while I realised that I couldn't just give up."

The physiotherapy Judy underwent concentrated mainly on her legs, which meant that she was not

getting the strength back in her upper body.

She said: "The thing is, your body adjusts to just using one hand. The affected side just shuts off."

### Springs

After doing some research on the internet, Judy found out about chartered physiotherapist Glyn Blakey and his work with rehabilitating stroke victims through the SaëboFlex device.

Glyn explained: "Most stroke patients can squeeze, but cannot open their fingers. The SaëboFlex uses springs to allow you to open your fingers and perform grasp and release exercises that have previously been impossible. The theory is that you can retrain the brain to perform these movements."

The device helps patients to open and close their hands again and perform tasks such as picking up a bottle and drinking from it, which they could not have done before.

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