

Update: 20 June 2010

I have sat and thought about how to write this latest and final update for the past couple of weeks. It has been a month to the day since I last updated everyone on my condition and progress.

It is with pleasure I can let you all know that on July 1st I will be **walking** out of the Burwood Spinal Hospital and moving on with the next phase of my life.

Ever since I was handed crutches about a month ago they pushed me hard to spend as much time on my feet as I could. Within a week I pushed myself to make it back from the gym to the ward on the crutches . . . a few stops but no sitting down. By the end of the following week I started to walk with only 1 crutch and again pushed hard to walk the distance back to the ward.

I guess it is true that “success breeds success,” as it wasn’t too long after walking with one crutch that I had the confidence and knew I could do it by myself. Appropriately, I was at the park with my wife and kids on the weekend when I took my own first shaky steps . . . plenty of soft grass around, just in case! Needless to say, it was a very emotional moment for my family and I when I stumbled 10 paces or so.

Since then I have been trying to build up my stamina and improve my gait. For the most part I walk with at least 1 crutch, sometimes 2 for longer distances, and can only make a few hundred metres before I need to rest. However, this is improving everyday and I have hardly sat in my wheelchair for the past few days.

At the gym, the physio’s continue to help me build some upper body strength as I can still barely get my arms above my head. Lately we have also been working on getting up and down off the ground without any aids, which is still an all out effort but do-able. Additionally, they have been introducing balance exercises and dynamic movements so I can get steadier on my feet.

Spasms still play havoc with my movement everyday and this will most likely be a continual issue for a lot longer yet. Internal issues and altered sensation are other areas that I will also be dealing with for a much longer time frame.

I am very fortunate with the recovery I have made. Sure, I was fit beforehand and have worked as hard as I can from the moment I was allowed to start moving. But, in reality a substantial part of my recovery is blind luck. If my injury had been slightly higher or a fraction of an inch more, the spinal cord could have been cut completely and the chance of recovery is almost zero. One of the hardest parts about this stay in hospital has been watching and meeting others who have not been quite as fortunate. They have been working equally as hard but most will not walk from here and have a lot more than I do to deal with. I wish them all the best and will never forget them or take my recovery for granted.

I am also very fortunate for my family and friends. My wife and kids, who have lived every day of this injury with me and given me the greatest source of motivation . . . to be a husband and dad again. My immediate family and my wife's family, who have all been so supportive, cheered me along and made countless visits. And my friends worldwide, in and out of water-skiing, who have all rallied behind me, sent messages and positive energy that has given me the strength to get back on my feet again.

From here, we will spend a week or so with my family in Auckland and then return to Florida on July 13th. I have a lot more rehabilitation ahead of me but primarily as an out-patient from our home in Florida so hopefully our lives can attain a little more normalcy. Temporary changes will need to be made but in a year or so with time to heal and get strength back . . . who knows, anything is possible.

Thank you to everyone for your support and sharing this journey with me.

Kyle Eade
AKA "the walking Kiwi"