



*Above:* Recovering stroke patients like Russ Noyes have a new device to help them work on regaining control of their hands. A mechanical arm allows him to incorporate hand functionality in therapy and at home by supporting the weakened wrist, hand, and fingers.

# Stroke patients get a new grasp on life

Being able to brush your teeth or hold a coffee cup are simple, everyday tasks most of us take for granted. For stroke patient Russ Noyes, they are significant milestones on the rehabilitation road.

Russ suffered a devastating stroke in September 2013, which left him paralysed on one side of his body and unable to speak or walk.

Nearly two years on, he made significant progress in his recovery and regained lost independence thanks to a rehabilitation program managed by occupational therapists and physiotherapist from Brighton Health Campus and a mechanical arm.

The arm now has been added to the rehabilitation program for patients who have suffered a stroke or another neurological condition. It uses dynamic and static splinting systems to allow stroke or serious brain injury patients retrain their muscles and brain to regain lost function.

Clinical Lead Physiotherapist at Brighton Health Campus Paul Bew said the rehab unit acquired the new technology for use in occupational therapy and physiotherapy sessions to help patients recover sooner after seeing the success Russ was achieving with its use.

“Being able to provide our patients with this technology will have a huge impact on their rehabilitation,” Paul said.

“We’ve already seen some great results and we have patients practicing for up to 90 minutes on the device as part of their daily rehab program.”

Paul said the device is capable of teaching the brain to re-program itself and allows patients to re-learn how to use their hands through functional repetitive activity.

“It enables patients to regain use of their arms and hands, giving them back independence and improving their quality of life.

“As well as doing traditional therapy exercises, clients will be able to immediately use their hands to perform everyday tasks, which we hope will advance their recovery.”

Russ, and his wife Kerry, purchased their own mechanical arm September 2014 and have set up a rehab program at home to progress Russ’s recovery and enhance his monthly OT and physio session at Brighton.

“It’s important to keep up the routine. I have the self-motivation to push myself, and with my wife’s support I keep achieving goals. I keep improving. I couldn’t even touch my nose before, now I can,” Russ said.

The National Stroke Foundation recommends the F.A.S.T. test as an easy way to remember the most common signs of stroke:

Using the F.A.S.T. test involves asking these simple questions:



## Face

Check their face. Has their mouth drooped?



## Arms

Can they lift both arms?



## Speech

Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?



## Time

Time is critical. If you see any of these signs call 000 straight away.

The rehabilitation unit at Brighton Health Campus now has nine devices available for stroke and neurological patients.

Paul said people who are up to 20 years post neurological injury show improvements in proximal strength and control of their affected arm.

“It is a great experience to take many years of clinical research and use it to directly influence the lives of individual patients and their families,” Paul said.