

MEMBER STORY

by  Best Doctors[®]



NAME:
Sascha
Dellebeke

AGE:
42

For a **SECOND MEDICAL OPINION**
call **1800 830 082** or visit
www.askbestdoctors.com

REASON FOR CONTACTING BEST DOCTORS:

uncertain about diagnosis and possible treatment

BEST DOCTORS EXPERT SPECIALTY:

medical rehabilitation

Clear diagnosis and treatment advice saw an improvement in symptoms and helped treating physician to better understand condition.

Sascha Dellebeke was born with spina bifida occulta, a condition caused by a developmental disorder of the spine which results in a small separation or gap occurring in some of the vertebrae. She suffered considerable discomfort during her childhood, and by the time she was twenty the symptoms had worsened to the point where, in 1993, she had to undergo surgery. During the operation a steel cage was placed to protect the vulnerable vertebrae.

The procedure was successful. For years Sascha hardly suffered from any symptoms. She worked as a horse riding instructor, a job that she really enjoyed, and had two healthy children. She remembers only too well how all that changed on June 8th 2014. Sascha was at the riding school and as she stepped into the sand she suddenly felt a snap in her back. At first she presumed it was lumbago, a condition she suffered from every now and then, and which she always recovered from after a few days rest. Not this time though. This time her symptoms worsened quickly and the back pain soon radiated to her left leg, and was accompanied with incontinence. Her symptoms had reached a point where she couldn't work anymore, and visiting her beloved riding school had become impossible. After all these years, Sascha was devastated to be back at square one.

New imaging and scans of her back didn't reveal the cause of her symptoms. The material which was inserted during her operation in 1993 was unfortunately now blocking the view. What followed was a very frustrating period in which Sascha was sent from pillar to post. There were varying opinions on the cause of her condition, but much to her frustration these all remained vague and uncertain. After numerous diagnoses it became clear that her doctors were moving more and more towards pain relief as the final option. But this was not something Sascha was willing to accept. She still wanted to find out what was causing her symptoms and more importantly: what treatment was available to take these away.

“ The report has helped me trust my treating physician even more ”

“ The process was very smooth, it was just a matter of weeks before I had a report that I could move forward with ”

Determined that a cause could be found, she contacted her health insurance provider who suggested an international second opinion by Best Doctors. Sascha remembers how relieved she felt during her initial phone call with Best Doctors. She was given ample opportunity to share her story, starting with the symptoms she had suffered from as a child, up to that day in July 2014 and the tough year that followed in which she was examined in great depth. The Best Doctors nurse also asked her about how she was coping psychologically: by the time she reached out to Best Doctors she hadn't been working for over a year. And being a single mother made coping with her condition even harder.

In the meantime the Best Doctors medical team started collecting Sascha's complete medical history. Within weeks all her medical data was presented to a leading neurosurgeon and expert in diseases of the spine and spinal cord.

“ Finally I was being heard ”

The expert shared Sascha's belief that there was probably more that could be done to find the cause of her complaints and he advised her to ask for additional scans of her back. He also suggested several other treatment options that might help her relieve the pain. In addition, he informed Sascha that based on the outcome of the additional scans, a fixation of the spine could be a last resort in order to relieve the pain. Sascha immediately shared the expert's advice with her pain management specialist, who was impressed by the report and congratulated Sascha for seeking the medical opinion of a foreign expert.

Together with her treating physician Sascha has made further progress in her rehabilitation, focusing primarily on her nerves and a possible hernia that hadn't been noticed before. Slowly her condition is improving. She's started teaching horse riding again and has a new job. The pain hasn't disappeared, but partly due to the cooperation between Best Doctors and her treating pain management specialist, Sascha is now looking to the future with much more confidence.

14.2.6005 This is a real Best Doctors case. In order to respect and maintain the patient's privacy, personal details have been modified. Photographs are used for illustrative purposes only. A second medical opinion is not intended to substitute professional medical advice or provide a medical diagnosis or therapeutic recommendations on its own and the outcome does not represent or guarantee that anyone will obtain a similar result, as the case will vary depending, among other circumstances, on the information provided to Best Doctors. It is prohibited to copy, use or publish the content or parts of the content of this case story without the express permission of Best Doctors. Best Doctors and the star-in-cross logo are trademarks of Best Doctors, Inc., in the United States and in other countries, and are used under license. All rights reserved © 2016.