

## A man. A promise. A bike. Parkinson's disease patient Tony crosses the Alps.

At the beginning, there was a vow: "If everything goes well with this surgery, I will cross the Alps and visit my namesake Saint Anthony of Padua." That is what Tony Seidl promised himself prior to a major neurological procedure called Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS). This is his story.

### *Too young for Parkinson's disease*

When Tony Seidl from Altoetting, Upper Bavaria (Germany), was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease (PD) at the age of 38, he was living life to the fullest. He had just got married, had become a father and was enjoying a successful career. Then all of a sudden came the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease: "Of course the diagnosis was a shock. My life was turned upside down. At first, I thought this cannot possibly be true. PD is only a disease for the elderly," Tony (49) reminisces.

### *Years of uncertainty*

Looking back to the time when he was diagnosed, Tony first and foremost remembers the long period of uncertainty: "In the beginning, I did not know what was actually wrong with me. I just felt uncomfortable in my everyday life. I trembled and the easiest activities became increasingly difficult." At first, he thought the reason could be simple muscular tension. He consulted one physician after another in search of an explanation until he was eventually diagnosed with Parkinson's disease several years later.

### *First a walking stick, soon a wheel chair*

It soon became clear that the disease was progressing aggressively. "At first I just needed a walking stick. But after a short period of time I also needed a walker and a wheelchair for distances greater than 50 meters. Sooner or later this meant that I had to quit my job. At only 45 years old, I had to retire." Before his disease, Tony had for 15 years been head of a telecommunications department in a medium-sized company.

### *Giving up? – No, thanks!*

Giving up? This was out of the question for Tony: "I was not willing to accept the rapid disease progression. There simply had to be another option." In order to learn everything about PD and potential therapy options, Tony searched the Internet for days. Finally he came across an additional treatment possibility: DBS.

### *The day that changed everything*

After Tony had learnt about DBS, he and his consulting physician decided in favor of DBS to mitigate the PD symptoms and to regain his quality of life. "At last, on my 48th birthday, I was implanted with a Vercise™ DBS System from Boston Scientific," he recalls. "Of course, I was very nervous before the surgery. Only a few years ago I would have not been able to imagine the opportunities and improved quality of life that I now have in my daily life." After the procedure Tony is doing great. He can even go for a swim of 500 meters, before his surgery he could not even do 50. Moreover, he can go out with his family again and is already making plans to put his promise into action.

### *Crossing the Alps to set an example*

Two years after the surgery, Tony not only wants to keep his promise – crossing the Alps with his bicycle and visiting the grave of his namesake Saint Anthony of Padua – but also wants to encourage other Parkinson's patients not to give up. He wants to show them that despite PD you can still achieve something in life, not least with the support of the European Parkinson's Disease Association (EPDA) and his participation in their Parkinson's 100 challenge, a fundraising initiative aimed at improving the lives of people with Parkinson's. Just in time for his 50th birthday, Tony will be starting his tour from Altoetting to Padua, Italy on May 7, 2016. On his way he will meet with other patients to share experiences and raise awareness about PD and available therapy options.

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