

Rehabilitation case study

# **Recovering full fitness following serious injury.**

Made possible



## One man's journey back to health after a life-threatening injury at work perfectly illustrates the value of QBE's hands-on case-managed approach to rehabilitation.

### A traumatic injury

John (not his real name) is a senior white collar worker with a large financial services firm. In January 2019, he was involved in a freak accident at work that left him with severe abdominal injuries. He blacked out immediately and remained unconscious as he was rushed to hospital, where doctors urgently assessed his injuries. His blood pressure was dangerously low, falling to just 50/30. With no serious blood loss visible, internal bleeding was suspected. A CT scan indicated a ruptured abdominal artery and John was rushed into emergency surgery.

Repairing the artery was no simple task. John's wife had hurried to the hospital just in time to see him wheeled into theatre. She was warned her husband stood just a one in ten chance of survival. Six unimaginably anguished hours later, she learned the operation had gone well and John's condition had been stabilised.

John remembers little of those first few days, but as he regained his bearings he learned what had happened and how he had acquired a twelve-inch scar up his abdomen. He recovered well from the trauma of emergency surgery. Nine days later, he was back home. In those first weeks,

John spent 18 out of 24 hours asleep. 'Just taking a few steps left me completely shattered,' he recalls. 'It was as if I had turned overnight from a fit forty-something into a 90-year-old man. Getting back to work seemed like a daunting challenge.'

### Rehabilitation

This is where the rehabilitation service offered by QBE with its employers' liability insurance packages kicked in. A week after John left hospital, a case manager working for QBE's rehabilitation provider contacted him to assess his injuries and see where she could safely help expedite his recovery.

The case manager's role is pivotal to the rehabilitation service QBE offers. A dedicated point of contact with the injured person, case managers continually assesses which interventions will work best. They coordinate the work of physiotherapists, personal trainers and counsellors, progressing the programme based on feedback from them and the injured person.

'Some people need gentle encouragement to realise they're capable of more than they think,' John's case manager says. 'Others want to run before they can walk. Doing too much too soon can delay recovery by weeks or months. A key part of my role is judging exactly what an individual can take on - and when.'

It can come as a shock to an injured person how fast the body loses muscle tone and exercise tolerance after several days' complete inactivity. John also faced the after effects of powerful emergency surgery anaesthetics and of having 30 units of blood replaced - three times the total volume in the human body. This left John temporarily anaemic and vulnerable to infection, as transfused blood contains no white blood cells.

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### Recovery

With home visits from physiotherapists and a personal trainer, John made impressive progress. By late February, he was taking light exercise and swimming. As his strength returned, he no longer needed physiotherapy after April, having already begun a phased return to work in late March.

The impact of an accident like John's often goes beyond the injured person. His wife, who came so close to losing him, and a colleague who witnessed the incident both received counselling through QBE. Clinical evidence shows holistic rehabilitation that looks at an injured person's entire support network, speeds recovery and improves return-to-work outcomes.

### Looking back

John cannot speak too highly of his rehabilitation and his case manager. 'I never experienced anything but total support and empathy,' he says, 'She was 100% on my side, constantly focused on what I needed to get back to health. You can't beat the NHS for emergency treatment. They saved my life. But they don't have the resources to provide the rehabilitation I needed. I was lucky to get a level of support that's simply not available through the NHS, or even through private health insurance. It's something I'll always be hugely grateful for.'