

Angela Snow



Hi, my name is Angela. I have recently become a volunteer Peer Visitor with Limbs4life.

In 1995 I developed Pneumococcal Septicaemia (blood poisoning). The infection developed very quickly, and caused gangrene in both my legs, and both arms. I had both legs amputated mid-calf, my left arm at mid-forearm, and all the fingers and half the thumb on my right hand.

Two months in the Austin was followed by 8 months at Royal Talbot. Whilst in rehab, I learned how to drive again. I knew that this would be very important to my independence. I work part-time in Student Administration at La Trobe University, and fortunately the University has been very supportive.

Any serious illness affects the whole family, and it was especially difficult for my husband and children. Like many others, my body image was seriously damaged by this illness. It's unfortunate that there isn't much research or information available. I have found Counselling very helpful. I believe that the excellent teamwork in the Austin and Talbot was essential to my survival, and for enabling me to learn how to function again.

I don't have any phantom pain, thankfully. I walk without any kind of aid (I couldn't hold a cane anyway). I have an electric wheelchair at work, and one at home. There are times when I develop blisters, or other problems with my legs. A wheelchair at the office enables me to go to work even if I can't walk far.

For the first few years, I had lots of problems with blisters, excess sweating and all sorts of fitting problems with my legs. Gradually, the problems have become less. I have recently started using legs with Harmony Pumps. At every step, the pumps 'suck out' the air between my skin and a silicone sleeve, and this ensures really good suspension. It's still early days, but I am finding that they feel more like a real leg, rather than something 'hanging on the end'. My legs are made at La Trobe Uni.

I use a Motion Control myo-electric arm, with a wrist-rotator. This has reasonable function, but because it is my 'dominant' hand, I do find that there are limits to what I can do with it. I go to Caulfield General Medical Centre for my arm.

It's been quite difficult to get information at times. I am delighted that Melissa and her colleagues have worked so hard to develop Limbs4Life. I am also delighted to be able to offer my support to new amputees. When I was in rehab, visitors with amputations made an enormous difference to my confidence. They helped me get ideas about what I could achieve. There is clearly a need for an organisation to develop a formal program for peer visiting. Staff change in hospitals all the time, and generally peer visiting has been dependent on one of the therapists "knowing someone" with amputations, who was willing to come in. Limbs4Life will now centralise this information, as well as arranging appropriate training.

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