

Robert Owen-Conway and his wife Lynn are back walking after having a knee replacement last November



Meet the Cardiff sports enthusiast who has a new knee thanks to robots

ROBERT OWEN-CONWAY, 76, SAID HAVING A MAKO KNEE REPLACEMENT AT NUFFIELD HEALTH CARDIFF AND VALE HOSPITALS WAS WORTH THE INVESTMENT

HIS days running marathons may be over, but keen sports enthusiast, cyclist and walker, Robert Owen-Conway, is looking forward to getting back on his bike this spring - something he didn't think he would be saying a few years ago.

After suffering from arthritis for more than 10 years, the pain became progressively worse during lockdown to the point he was no longer able to cycle as he couldn't get off his bike. Even walking and sleeping was a struggle.

Robert, who also used to be a keen runner, turned to Nuffield Health Cardiff and Vale Hospital, and last November, he underwent knee surgery carried out by a robotic arm.* Following his treatment, the 76-year-old is getting back into fitness by enjoying three-mile daily walks with his wife Lynn, before he jumps back on his bike for rides around Cardiff and in picturesque Solva in West Wales, where the couple own a holiday home.

He said: "Walking is absolutely perfect. Before the operation, my wife was always ahead but now she can't keep up with me!

I used to go to the gym and played squash and rugby and I went running and did marathons in my forties. I particularly enjoy cycling and that is what I am looking forward to returning to the most."

"It was a big investment but it is important for me and my wife that I get back to living an active life while I am in my mid-70s and still fit."

**Invasive procedures are not risk-free and must not be performed on anyone under 18 years old. Always seek independent medical advice and give the procedure careful consideration before going ahead.*

SIGNIFICANT ARTHRITIS

Before the pandemic, Robert went to his GP where x-rays showed the initial damage. During the height of his pain during lockdown, a friend suggested making an appointment with consultant orthopaedic knee surgeon Christopher Wilson at the private sector's Vale of Glamorgan hospital.

After assessing it and subsequent x-rays, Robert's knee was severely out of shape and was severely affected by arthritis.

The knee specialist said: "Mr Owen-Conway struggled with daily activities, had a limited range of movement, getting comfortable to sleep was a problem and his knee scores indicated severe symptoms. X-rays showed significant arthritis, which only a total knee replacement would resolve."

"Being an active man, we discussed the possibility of the Mako robotically-assisted knee replacement, which would allow him to return comfortably to his hobbies of cycling and walking. Already he is doing really well with a much better range of movement."

PERSONALISED PLAN

While the surgeon is still in control of the technology it is the robotic arm that removes the diseased and damaged bone and cartilage. The new knee implant, which the robot has helped size, is then fitted precisely into the space created.

The process is described as "fail-safe" as the robot prevents anything from being done which isn't exactly right. Using a 3D virtual model of the patient's anatomy devised from their CT scan before surgery, the surgeon is able to implant the joint replacement in the best position for the patient with a high degree of accuracy.

Mr Wilson said: "This next-generation knee replacement technology appears to be the way forward. As there is improved precision and this may offer more consistent results and more rapid recovery with less discomfort, although it depends on the individual. The robot* does not replace the surgeon but is used as an aid to increase accuracy during the operation, based on scans performed before the surgery."

There are always risks involved in any surgical procedure but the risk can be reduced. As with any surgical procedure involving anaesthetic, there are risks but these are all explained clearly beforehand. The robotic method can increase accuracy and reduce but not eradicate the risk of complications.

"LIFE IS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER"

Robert went in for his new knee on the morning of November 19 and was able to stand with a frame the same day. Although,



Knee specialist Christopher Wilson and theatre clinical lead Dave Bennett with the Mako robot at Nuffield Health's Vale hospital

the exact amount of recovery time depends on your health and the extent of your surgery. Every patient will have different results and recovery times will vary.

Robert spent just two nights in the Vale hospital before being discharged home. He said he found everybody very helpful and he appreciated the direct instruction that made sure he was up and about quickly.

The retired lighting and service engineer said: "The improvement has been in very definite stages and has been quite dramatic. I am really glad I found Mr Wilson, as he certainly knows his stuff and inspired confidence in me for the new robotically-assisted option."

"Life is just getting better and better."
**Individual results vary and the lifetime of a knee replacement is not indefinite.*

MEET THE EXPERTS

Nuffield Health Cardiff and Vale Hospitals will be holding a free open evening for other potential patients who are thinking of having Stryker Mako robotic-assisted knee surgery. The meet the expert event with consultant orthopaedic surgeons, Christopher Wilson and Phillip Thomas will take place on Thursday, March 10, at the Nuffield Health Vale Hospital at 6.15pm.

To book your place call 02920 836714 or go to the hospital's events page on the website here www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/cardiff-and-vale#events For more information about Nuffield Health Cardiff and Vale Hospitals visit the website www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/cardiff-and-vale or call 02920 836714.



A meet the expert evening will be held on March 10 for people wanting to know more about robotic surgery