

HEALTH

Treatment for injury, inflammation, pain

Caribbean Hand Centre brings ARP WAVE system

By ANNE HILTON

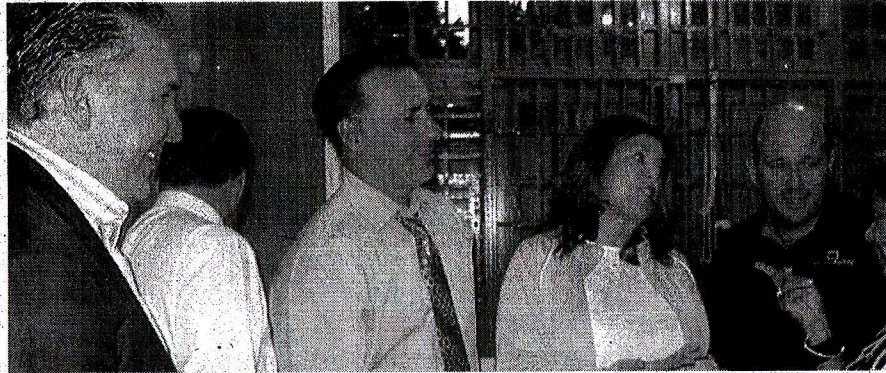
HAVE you ever stopped to consider what you'd do if you weren't able to use your hands, if the hand you favour, the right or the left, were injured? I had a wake-up call when I developed "trigger thumb".

In fact I didn't know it was trigger thumb until I got an email from *Newsday's* Features Editor forwarding an email headed "Caribbean Hand Centre Foundation, founded by Dr Alejandro Badia, celebrates Fifth Year Anniversary" with a request that I interview Dr Badia.

On reaching the Caribbean Hand Centre in Ana Street, I met Dr Godfrey Araujo that I had first met when I took part in trials on the drug Protelos to treat bone loss in osteoporosis. I asked him why, in the past few weeks, my right thumb hurt and clicked audibly when I tried to straighten it. "That," said he, "is trigger thumb," adding that the treatments were massage, shots and, as a last resort, surgery.

Later, when I checked out the Caribbean Hand Centre on the Internet I learned it is an NGO founded (and I quote) "to promote the investigation, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of hand and upper limbs conditions in TT and the wider Caribbean".

Readers who have no problems with their hands may not appreciate the dire need for a foundation for training therapists and surgeons treating patients with hand and upper arm injuries. Take my (admittedly minor) problem with my right thumb. I'm right handed. Writing is possible – but only just. While never the best of handwriting at the



DR BRUCE RUBIN (from left) general neurology, spastic management and neuro-rehabilitation, and specialist in pain management; Dr Godfrey Araujo (turning away from the camera), orthopedic surgeon, upper extremities, The Fracture and Orthopedic Centre; Dr Alejandro Badia (surgery of the hand and upper extremities); Joan Zell, occupational therapist, certified hand therapist; Matias Polonsky, ARP Wave Technician; and Lisa Niles physical therapist, Bon Viva House.

best of times, now it's jerky and spidery and almost indecipherable to me, let alone other people, while my signature on cheques may cause some raised eyebrows at my bank.

Buttoning my blouse and shirts is a painful experience – and don't get me started on cooking my food, on chopping vegetables and cutting up meat. And as for sewing a button on clothes – that's going to be an uncomfortable experience, too.

Whether I like it or not I need my thumb for the space bar on the computer – and an hundred and one other things I do during the day. Mine is a minor injury, others with carpal tunnel syndrome suffer more; in fact most if not all of us need our hands to earn our daily bread. When they are damaged, bones fractured or broken, or crippled by

arthritis it can be absolutely devastating for the patient who could be almost if not completely helpless.

Treating hand, arm and upper limb injuries is a very specialised branch of medicine. A wealthy patient can travel to the US for treatment, but if he or she can't afford to go to specialised centres in the developed world, hope is dawning in the Caribbean Hand Centre with international specialists (both surgeons and therapists) visiting the Centre from time to time to treat patients while training surgeons and therapists here.

When I visited the Hand Centre Joan Zell, a specialist hand therapist, told me she had come to conduct a workshop with therapists from all over the Caribbean in making splints for children with hand abnormalities or con-



THE ARP machine.

ditions such as cerebral palsy.

However, the focus of attention in the Caribbean Hand Centre (CHC) that day, Thursday, January 16 was the ARP WAVE machine. The ARP WAVE system is (and I quote now from the brochure given me by ARP WAVE technician Matias Polonsky) "a combination of a proprietary electrical device and carefully designed protocols which target injury at the source, eliminate inflammation and dramatically accelerate the recovery of all soft tissue injury." The treatment is called "Neuro-Therapy".

To date it seems that for the best part of the last ten years only athletes with sports injuries have been treated with ARP WAVE to get them back on the field or track, sports arena, basketball court, or ice rink as quickly as possible. Golfers, football, basketball, baseball, track and field stars and hockey players have all bounced back from strains and sprains thanks to ARP WAVE treatment. That treatment is now being applied to children who have hand problems, the most impressive being a photograph of a child with cerebral palsy. That child's hand was twisted and clenched, unable to open to write, hold a ball or a spoon, knife and fork (as those should be held). Then, after applying the ARP WAVE treatment the child's hand opened, able to clutch, to grasp, even to type.

Impressive as that photograph was, there is no substitute for seeing the ARP WAVE in action. So, when I told Dr Badia and ARP WAVE technician Polonsky about my osteoporosis, that I used a cane to prevent

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HEALTH

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● TREATMENT from Page 10B

This gave technician Matias a chance to show what his ARP WAVE system could do for me... I sat on a chair while Matias lifted the back of my blouse to attach what I suppose are electrodes to my back on either side of my spine. I felt a slight warm tingling sensation while I chatted and took photographs of the machine and sipped a little red wine (dispensed in celebration of the Fifth Anniversary of the Caribbean Hand Centre).

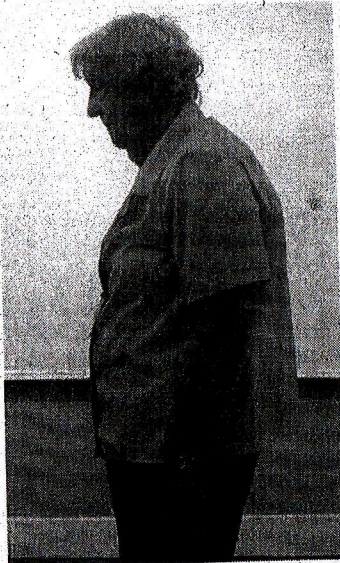
After about 15 or 20 minutes, Matias removed the electrodes (if this is what they were, you can see them at the bottom of my photograph of the ARP WAVE machine) and asked me to stand up straight - which, to my immense surprise, I did. "It's magic!" I exclaimed. For the first time in two to three years I was standing erect with no pain whatsoever. Dr Badia took my camera to photograph me

and Matias, me beaming with joy at being completely pain free. I even found I'd recovered a sense of balance...but only for, I'm sorry to say, and as Matias warned me, the next eight to ten hours. In fact the relief lasted until lunch the next day. For those few hours I was erect and walking on air.

How does ARP WAVE work? And what does it stand for? ARP is Accelerated Recovery Performance that works by relaxing the muscles - which should indicate it doesn't work with all kinds of pain.

Checking out ARP WAVE on the Internet I learned that if the therapy is for your type of pain you can lease a machine for US\$2,500 for a ten-day treatment, combined with with non-ARP treatments.

Opinions on the Internet are mixed, some reckon ARP WAVE is a scam; others are full of praise for the treatment. I know it would work for me - if I won the lottery and could go to Miami for the full



HERE I am, bent with the pains of osteoporosis.

course of treatment in combination with diet and exercise. To quote the brochure again, with ARP WAVE there's no need for drugs, there is



HERE I AM, beaming, pain-free and standing up straight for the first time in the best part of two to three years with ARPWAVE technician Matias Polonsky.

rapid recovery, an end to pain and increased range of motion."

Will a trauma specialist here get some ARP Machines (and trained technicians to operate and care for them) or the Port-of-Spain General Hospital acquire ARP WAVE machines to help people with chronic pain like mine, for those suffering from sports injuries, for children with hand problems, among them, cerebral palsy - and for those recover-

ing from surgery, since neuropathy can help those recovering from hip and from knee replacement surgery as well and with certain auto injuries?

And, given the number of serious injuries resulting from car accidents in TT these days, surely it seems well worth while to at least consider bringing ARPWAVE Neuro-Therapy to Trinidad and Tobago to relieve our aches and pains?



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