

New treatment gave sufferer her life back

HEALTHY LIVING

After years of chronic spinal pain, Anne was facing risky surgery... then she tried Tamars

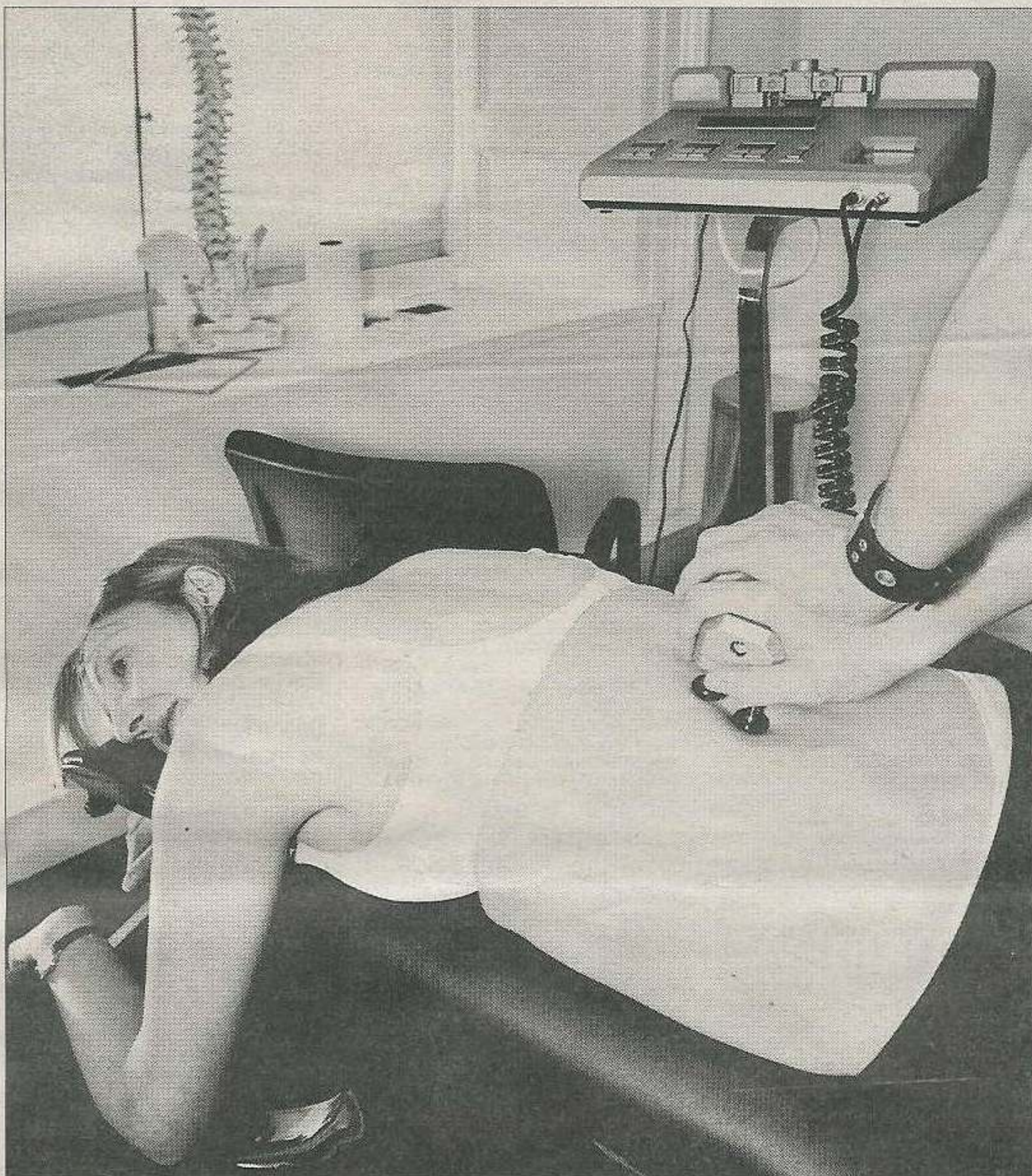
■ SARAH HOWDEN

FOR 17 years, Anne Duck couldn't lead a normal lifestyle. Even holding her newborn son was a problem for the 51-year-old teacher.

Everyday tasks others took for granted, such as vacuuming, dusting, shopping, even pushing a shopping trolley, were difficult and painful. And travelling long-haul was out. The reason? Back pain.

"It started after the birth of my child Colin 17 years ago," recalls Anne. "My back felt weak after the birth and one day I was trying to get out of the car carrying the baby and I got stuck. I couldn't move. I couldn't get out or back in the car. My lower back just gave in.

"The pain initially was sporadic but it developed into being pretty constant after a while. It was a dull pain that increased in intensity as the day went on. A lot of people



EASING THE PAIN: Anne Duck receives the Tamars treatment from Jeffrey Knox. Pictures: JULIE HOWDEN

"I was able to do things other people take for granted, like bend down and pick something up or tie my shoelace" ANNE DUCK

have isolated episodes but my pain was there all the time." Anne's back pain developed into a disc problem and, after an examination 12 years ago it was discovered she suffered from spina bifida occulta – a weakness in the spine – which had caused a disc lesion.

She continues: "Everything became difficult, even travelling in the car, and I had to make lifestyle changes. I had to give up cycling and exercise in general as it absolutely crippled me. Luckily my work meant I could move around or otherwise there would have been no way I could continue working."

Anne is not alone. Back pain affects some 17.3 million people in the UK, and every year an additional 3.5 mil-



lion new sufferers succumb to the problem, costing the country £6 billion every year in benefits, treatments and lost working hours.

"Back problems are very, very common," says Jeffrey Knox of 21st Century Back Care in Mansfield Place. "There's not many people who go through life without any back problems, and many don't do anything about it."

According to sports injury specialist Jeffrey, the cause of the majority of back problems is down to the spine becoming less supple which causes particular joints to become overstressed, leading to pain, stretched ligaments and excessive wear and tear.

"Back pain episodes are an early warning sign and if function is not restored, joint degeneration is inevitable," he adds.

And sometimes even a session or two at the physiotherapist, chiropractor or osteopath to work on the area of pain may not do the trick long-term. And so, after having

personal experience in recurrent back pain, Jeffrey found out about technology-assisted micro-mobilisation and reflex stimulation (Tamars).

He explains: "It's a full spinal treatment which works on the spine right the way from the base to the neck. If you just treat one area problems can go on elsewhere in the spine."

And so, the hand-held, computer-console-controlled Tamars device restores mobility and flexibility to the musculoskeletal joints of the spine.

"Usually what a physiotherapist would do is use their thumbs to try to get into the spine and mobilise it. It's very, very difficult as it's the bones in your thumb against the joints in the spine. So the handset enables quicker mobilisation and allows us to work the whole spine." But it doesn't stop there. "All the joints in the spine should be in a straight line but often people with back problems have some sort of curvature in the spine which causes stress which causes damage to discs and joints.

"The straightening of the spine is very, very important. And this is done through the handset too. So we can now get the whole thing freed up and straightened. It makes a big difference long-

term." In just two months since 21st Century Back Care opened in Edinburgh with the Tamars treatment, Jeffrey has successfully treated a variety of patients in only four or five-hour-long sessions.

Anne is just one of them. Having been offered a spinal fusion by her consultant, Anne decided to research alternative treatments and discovered Tamars.

"It's given me a better quality of life," she says. "My back is more reliable. I have much greater mobility although the problem hasn't gone away. A spinal fusion is risky and painful and I didn't want it – this has given me what I need. After the first treatment, I immediately felt taller, looser and freer. It was lovely not to feel restricted.

"And with each subsequent treatment I was able to do the things other people take for granted, like bend down and pick something up or tie my shoelaces.

"Anyone who has a back problem will travel to the ends of the Earth to find a treatment that works. Osteopathy and acupuncture helped but this is the icing on the cake. This has moved me on to having a better life."

■ For more information about Tamars, telephone 21st Century Back Care on 0131-557 4404. showden@edinburghnews.com