

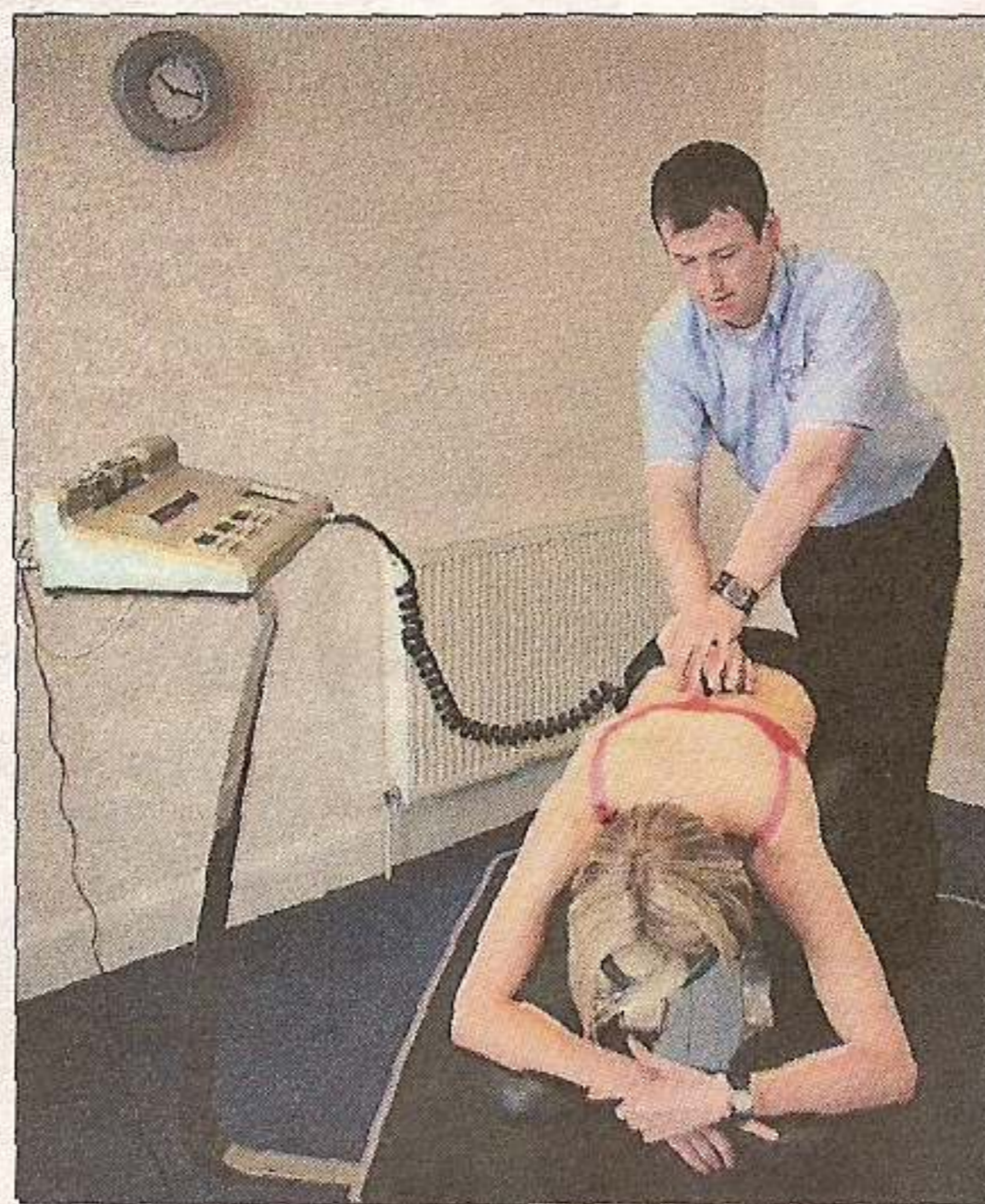
Spinal tap ... and rub

Put yourself in capable bionic hands to see the back of pain

IF YOU'VE HAD TO GIVE UP YOUR favourite sport, been forced to take weeks off work and feel twice your age due to back pain, you are not alone. Around 80 per cent of us will suffer back pain at some time.

Despite the treatments on offer, from osteopaths, chiropractors, physiotherapists and even surgeons, many chronic sufferers find no lasting relief for their condition. So the promise of a treatment that will not only cure your aches and pains but leave you in good enough shape to get back to cycling, skiing or simply tying your own laces is appealing.

Technology Assisted Micro-mobilisation and Reflex Stimulation (TAMARS) is a new approach to the treatment of chronic and acute neck and back pain. The technology – including hydraulics and a “bionic hand” – is combined with a human touch: a skilled practitioner uses the touch-sensitive mechanical “hand” to manipulate the back. Jeff Knox, of 21st Century BackCare, has treated all ages – from a nine-year-old with a judo injury to a man in his nineties. “It’s flexible enough to use on any age or



type of back problem as you can intensify the treatment as the body responds and releases,” he explains.

Injury and pain combine to force twists in the spine which in turn stress other parts of the back. So, the main aim of the treatment is to realign the spine and restore its natural elasticity and suppleness.

For a recent injury, one or two treatments

are often enough; for longer-term problems it can take up to six. Whatever the condition, the basic treatment follows the same three-step process. The “spasm” stage relaxes the muscles and prepares the back for the “reflex” mode, which uses rapid “hammering” along the spine, stimulating the muscles. Once the muscles are loosened up the back is ready for the crucial “mobilisation” stage. Gentle, alternating pressure is applied diagonally across the spine, coaxing the vertebra back into line.

The treatment couch is curved to allow maximum support and freedom for the spine. The back may feel a little tender after a session but that soon eases and after only a couple of visits I felt a decrease in pain caused by a prolapsed disc. The machinery seems quite loud at first but I soon got used to it and the process is strangely relaxing – afterwards many patients report the best sleep they’ve had in years.

CLARE ALLEN

■ A one-hour session costs £70 at 21st Century BackCare, 9 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh (0131-557 4404, www.tamars.co.uk).