

I was eight years old when I was diagnosed with polio in Hungary. After our failed attempt at escaping to the west I was in an orphanage where I caught the polio virus while my mother was in prison. When she was released, she set about rehabilitating me with a daily regime of exercises. It took a year before I was able to take a few steps with elbow crutches but eventually I was able to attend school.

When I was 14, I had a muscle transplant on my right foot and the following year my left ankle was fixed because it was completely paralysed. I was still in plaster when the Hungarian revolution broke out and we took our chance to leave Hungary.

Once in England I had some physiotherapy in hospital and started school. After passing A levels I went to study Chemistry and met my husband. We married and I worked in research for three years. I was able to walk with one stick but only needed it outside.

When my first daughter was born, and I had no trouble carrying her. Two years later I gave birth to her sister. At the age of 30 I was at the peak of my abilities. My third daughter was born 8 years later. I was a part time science teacher and carried on teaching for 26 years, carrying heavy books, standing in classrooms, and walking without a stick.

I was not ready to retire at 60 so I trained as a chiropodist and left teaching. At first, I was visiting patients as well as looking after them in my surgery, but gradually I found carrying my heavy case even though it was on wheels difficult. I could work more efficiently from home. But sitting most of the day took its toll. In the beginning I would greet people as they arrived, then I left the front door open with a notice to invite them in, which meant that I did not even have to get up between patients.

I hardly noticed the deterioration over the next sixteen years as a chiropodist although I had to have first one then two callipers to stop the hyperextension of my knees. I gave up work when we moved to be near our grandchildren and now, I use two sticks indoors and an electric mobility scooter outdoors.

I can still drive my Motability car, but I have gradually lost the ability to use the stairs since I had a stairlift for the past thirteen years. Muscle loss is part of getting old and I am finding it more difficult even to stand up and to walk. My balance is very bad, and I fall easily. I have a small hairdresser's stool on wheels in the kitchen which allows me to carry heavy pans with two hands, and to Hoover and wash the floor. We have smooth floors downstairs so I can move easily. I have a stool in the shower which I take with me when visiting friends.

I shall be 82 next week and so I should be content with my life so far. I don't know what the future will bring but I shall cope with it.