Making his own miracle

By Perpetual Private Insights

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Carlos Samaan is a man looking to make his own miracle. Every day, his thoughts, prayers, money and time are devoted to something we all did without thinking – *learn to walk*.

At 28 years of age, a work auto accident severed Carlos' spine at C4, leaving him with no sensation or movement below his chest and limited use of his hands. As he says, "I was young and my life was good, working and travelling around Western Australia. And then I woke up in Accident and Emergency and I have to rely on someone to care for me 24/7."

We met Carlos' at his home in Perth. It's a sunlit home warmed by the smell of Turkish coffee.

Most of the lounge room is taken up by an exercise rack (nicknamed Baby Monster) and a Lokomat, which is a man-sized gait robot of mechanical arms, harnesses, a black oxygen mask and monitors.

Carlos lives with his family and his partner Monique. While he is assisted by physiotherapists and experts from a company called Neuromoves (specialising in spinal cord injuries), the daily motivation to push through the therapy is all Carlos:

"Imagine if you're in a bed or a wheelchair, 23-hours a day", he says. "The chance to get on that machine and walk for an hour. That's my golden hour."

"What fires together, wires together."

Every day Carlos works to make sure that his physical condition is not what determines the rest of his life:

- Each morning Carlos practices walking. The Lokomat gait robot he uses (the only one in Australia) is designed to retrain his nervous system, to reconnect nerves with muscles and create new pathways between the brain and the body. The robot is so complex and powerful that it takes three days to train a patient and their therapists in how to use it. The biodata it collects helps fine-tune Carlos' treatment and plot how the technology can be used for other patients around the world.
- Carlos travelled to Thailand this year to have an epidural stimulator inserted in his back. While we were in his home, we saw how the stimulator helped him "move" leg muscles that, without those electrical impulses, simply can't fire.
- He's used stem cell therapy to regenerate the damaged nerves in his spine – to kickstart the process of recapturing sensation.

The engine room

These treatments have been funded by the compensation payout Carlos received after that fateful day in 2011. The money is managed by Perpetual.

Chris Marshall, Carlos' Perpetual Adviser, says, "The money is the engine room for Carlos. If we manage it well Carlos can invest these vital treatments. Our financial plan for Carlos is about helping him pursue his health goals – and making sure he's financially secure for the rest of his life."

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