

LIFE CHANGING ARTIFICIAL LIMBS FOR PATIENTS

An Eastern Cape teenager whose hopes for a normal life were dashed since she was born with a disjoined ankle on her right leg have now been revived after receiving her prosthesis in less than 30 minutes at Frere Hospital in East London on Thursday.

Nzimankulu High pupil, Nomzolisi Nqadini, 18, from Qoqodala in Komani grew up with her right leg having a disjoined ankle and five years ago she was amputated at Frontier Hospital.

Nqadini said after that fateful day, all her hopes to live a normal life were dashed and she never imagined she would be able to walk with both legs in her life.

She said Eastern Cape Department of Health orthotists had reignited her dreams of a bright future.

Orthotists and prosthetists work with patients who need medical devices, such as braces and splints, that provide support to a body part. They customise the fit of their patients' medical devices to support individual needs.

"I never imagined I'd ever walk on my own again. When they cut my leg I thought all hope was gone for me to live a normal life.

"My leg was shorter than the other, and the joints were separated.

"It is miracle that I am getting this gift of walking, now I will get to live like a normal teenager. Do things that girls my age do like studying knowing I will be able to work for my family," said Nqadini.

She said her dream job was to become a healthcare worker so she could help others who are born physical impairments like herself.

"I want to be a nurse so that I can assist those who were born like me. I understand how it is not knowing what the future holds especially if you are like.

"But I always had hope for a better life and they have made it possible for me to chase my dreams."

Nolundi Bikwe, prosthetist and orthotist at Frere Hospital said the department was rolling out the new direct socket, which was a system prosthesis that is laminated on to a patient directly.

"The new system means that we need minimum equipment because the previous system that was used took a minimum of 30 days.

"This new system enables us to manufacture prosthesis directly onto the patient, and the patient gets to be fitted with prosthesis within 30 minutes."

Bikwe said the new technology would eliviate the pressure on them since there's an influx of patients that need prosthesis.

"Previously, we would cast or measure the patients in order to get their impressions, and they would have to leave without getting their prosthesis.

"After that process, they would wait for their prosthesis to be manufactured, but now it's a one day process. The entire procedure now is completed in a short time."

She said the department planned to take the service to rural parts of the province, in order to reduce backlogs of patients in need of prosthesis.

"When we are done at Frere Hospital - we will be in Livingstone Hospital in Gqeberha and there after we are planning to go out on outreach programmes focused on rural areas. So that those in rural communities also benefit from this initiative," said Bikwe.

Andile Martin ,47, of Duncan Village, said he had his right leg was amputated at Frere in 2018 due to diabetes.

"This leg is more comfortable and lighter and for me, it will change my life for the better.

"When I got diagnosed diabetic I thought only bad things would happen and I would never be able to walk on my own again because I didn't know I could get such assistance.

" I had to change the way I do things and I accepted my situation but now I'm going to be able to do what I love the most which is dancing and playing sport. I'm going to have a good time," said Martin.

Philisha Kanayee Chief Medical Orthotist & Prosthetist at Frere Hospital she was eager to have the new system to be introduced in the entire department.

"I can't wait for this system to go mainstream and cover all areas in the province.

"In the past, we would reach rural parts of the province through outreaches, but the process was too slow.

"The old system would take a month, but now it's done in one day so you imagine."

BY MFUNDO PILISO

