



COULD ROBOTICS SPELL THE END OF THE WHEELCHAIR?

Audio slideshow transcript: Life with paralysis

SOPHIE MORGAN:

My name's Sophie Morgan and I'm currently a TV presenter and also run my own company.

When I was eighteen, I was driving back from a party and I lost control of the car and in the crash basically, the car spun, flipped, landed and yeah I was paralysed instantly.

Every spinal cord injury is different. My vertebra was damaged at just around the sort of sternum level. What that means is, as a complete injury, I have no movement and no movement and no sensation from that level of injury down. For example, I had a computer charger sat against my leg and I didn't realise how hot it got and it actually burnt to the bone of my leg.

But then there's the longer term living with paralysis and sitting all the time. Your bones get brittle and your hips, your knees, your ankles – all your joints – can become constricted so that you become sort of chair-shaped.

I think for me the hard thing that comes with paralysis is being in a wheelchair because once you're in a wheelchair there's a sort of stigma or connotations attached to that. That for me was the harder thing to adapt to and how much of a challenge it is to get around and how much of a challenge it is just to live my day-to-day.

Even the smallest things like changing a duvet cover is really difficult - doing it sitting down. Accessing the kitchen because everything's a little bit higher. But then I can't carry a cup of tea because I have to use both my hands to push my chair. If it's raining I can't carry an umbrella. If it's dirty on the ground I just get filthy – everything gets filthy, my hands, my clothes. And it's quite difficult getting around and about – you have to be quite good in your chair so that you can sort of manage wheelie-ing off curbs and getting around over cobbled streets, especially in London.

I think because I wasn't born disabled, I'll always draw comparison between life walking and life not walking and life with paralysis. So, as much as I'm happy and live a really fulfilled amazing life, there are still frustrations that come around every day and I think they they would fall into the categories of frustration at not being able to get where I want to go and not being as independent as I'd like to be.

It was interesting – when I had my accident I was told by my consultant 'Oh you're so young – you'll be walking again in 10 years.' It's ten years now and that hasn't caught up – that medicine hasn't caught up yet but because technology has advanced so much I feel very much sort of on the precipice of change.