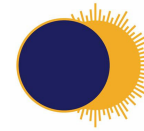


Marini's Story



Royal Hospital for
Neuro-disability

A national medical charity

When Marini arrived at the RHN, the only movement she could make was to shift her head slightly and move her eyes. A serious stroke had left her with Locked-in syndrome, meaning she was almost entirely paralysed but fully aware of her surroundings and capable of conscious thought.

A multidisciplinary team of clinicians created an individualised treatment programme for Marini involving specialised rehabilitation therapies and techniques that slowly enabled her to regain some movement in her hands and face. From this point, she was able to access specially adapted assistive technology, restoring her ability to communicate.

"Marini's progress has been astonishing," says Jane Bache, Assistive Technologist and coordinator of the RHN's 'Compass' assistive technology service. "She has used bio-feedback software to help increase the range of movement in her fingers and now operates a powered wheel chair with her hand and her head. She has also learnt to use an eye gaze system that involves using eye movement to access a PC, so she can have conversations, send emails to her family and play computer games."

Marini also made great progress in speech and language therapy. Despite not being able to speak, she can communicate very quickly using a coloured letter (e-tran) board. She has also gone from being fed through a tube to eating three meals a day orally.

One of Marini's biggest frustrations, however, was her inability to express emotion. After initial assessment sessions it was decided that music therapy, in conjunction with other rehabilitation treatments, could help.

"Music is very good at promoting emotions and evoking all sorts of different memories," explains music therapist Eirini Alexiou. "Marini chose music for me to play that she felt she would respond to emotionally. She loves the sound of wind chimes so we set them up so that she could play along using a small movement in her fingers. We moved through the different emotions one by one eventually Marini was able to explore these within her own song – she wrote the lyrics and chose a tune for me to play it to. We're going to record it so she can keep it forever."

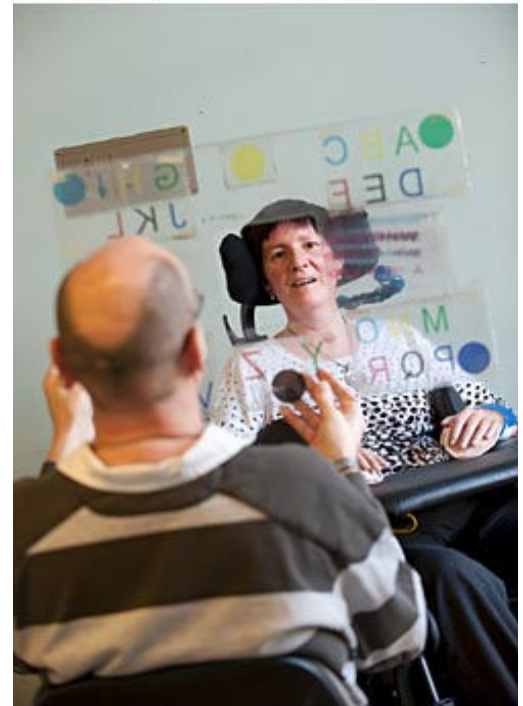
Marini's husband, Alan, says: "The morning we arrived at the RHN they had dressed Marini in her own clothes. It was such a beautiful sight. She's been making progress since day one: bringing her here was like turning on a switch. The staff have the skills and experience to ensure she continues to reach her full potential."

Alan's patience, strength and optimism in the face of such adversity is truly humbling. Marini is equally positive about what lies ahead:

"The staff at the RHN have shown me how much I can improve – their humour and positive attitude has been very motivating for us both. I have faith that I can continue to get better and big plans for the future. I'm going to Spain to see my mother – everything is possible."

2011 update

See Marini's latest story in our YouTube film clip (return to the Row Hard website for this)



Your support will help us to continue changing the lives of people like Marini; we can't put a price on that. Thank you for raising funds for the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability.