

My Greatest Challenge



Pictured above: Helen Lane with K2 in the background.

Helen Lane, a former Director of Operations with a UK hospital, tells *Rehab News* of her greatest challenge – that of recovery and rehabilitation from an acquired brain injury.

In August 2005, Helen Lane and her husband Stuart began their trek to K2, the world's second-highest mountain at 8,611 metres, located on the border of Pakistan and Tibet.

On the trail out across Pakistan's Karakoram mountain range, Helen slipped suddenly whilst crossing a glacier – the fall would completely change her life.

Her next memory was waking up two weeks later in a Neurosurgical Unit in England; the events in between had been wiped clean from her memory.

Prior to the accident, Helen worked long hours as the Director of Operations for a hospital and was an active individual who enjoyed jogging four times a week. Helen also had a great passion for the outdoors, having been born in Tipperary and brought up on a farm at the foothills of the Galtee Mountains.

Helen says, "I remember waking up in a hospital bedroom and being unable to walk or talk."

With ongoing physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions, Helen gradually regained her ability to walk and talk and was then transferred to Hillingdon Rehabilitation Unit – the hospital where she used to work as a Director.

Helen was allowed weekend leave from hospital so that she could spend time at home with her family and slowly begin to regain her independence.

Helen's speech therapist then suggested a referral to Rehab UK in order to move her rehabilitation onto the next stage. Eight months after her fall, she was finally discharged from hospital. However, Helen's hopes of returning to her former role were shattered when the hospital's HR Director suggested she take early retirement on medical grounds.

Helen says, "I found this extremely hard to accept. I was determined to return to my pre-injury state, believing I was capable of

returning to a highly-pressurised job."

Fourteen months after being discharged from hospital, Helen began at Rehab UK's London Brain Injury Centre.

"When I started, I was still of the mindset that I could perform at a senior level. Now, with the experience and training I've received from Rehab UK, I've decided that I want to work more locally, on a part-time basis, in a stress-free job."

Helen was set up on a suitable job placement by Rehab UK which helped her to rebuild her confidence and to discover her strengths.

"My first job placement, which I really enjoyed, demonstrated to me that I could still work as part of a team, problem-solve and complete a project," says Helen.

She adds, "Rehab UK has helped me change my focus and adapt to a new way of life." ■