

Pain Killers, "The Inventor"

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It was for my Father...

Frieder Kempe grew up in a house of pain. His father lost a leg in the 1944 battle of Monte Cassino and suffered excruciating phantom limb pain. Kempe wanted to help. "Whenever the pain came, my father would predict rain. I realized that his scar had no healthy skin covering, hence no protection from electromagnetic fields."

The answer, he decided, was to create a 'second skin' that would shield sensitive tissue, calm damaged nerve ends and stimulate blood circulation.

After studying engineering, Kempe began work on a prototype covering, which he tested on his father. By 1978, he'd developed a thin fabric cloth with interwoven metal fibres that significantly reduced his father's pain. Kempe named the product Farabloc.

Today, Farabloc is produced at Kempe's Coquitlam factory. Manufactured in many shapes and sizes and sold across the globe, it has proven to reduce phantom limb pain and delay the onset of muscle soreness experienced by athletes. German researchers are currently studying its effectiveness with painful fibromyalgia. Even without hard evidence, hundreds of happy Farabloc customers claim the product works on their pain.

When it comes to killing pain, Kempe says it's doesn't hurt to give his product a try.

George Illot is going camping this summer. That may not sound like much but when you've spent 51 years in constant pain, unable to play outdoors with your children, it's a very big deal.

At age 15, Illot was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, arthritis of the spine, which typically strikes men between 17 and 35. AS causes pain and spinal stiffness and, in severe cases, the spine fuses in a bent-forward position. At 39, Illot was so badly stooped that he'd dropped 10 inches from his six-foot frame and underwent spine-straightening surgery.

For the last eight years the 66-year-old retired MacMillan Bloedel lab manager experienced severe nerve pain in his right leg and foot, making sleep almost impossible. For Illot, medication was not an option. He has long been concerned about addiction and almost bled to death from an ulcer caused by anti-inflammatory drugs.

Five months ago, in desperation, Illot's wife sent for a Farabloc blanket, which she folded in four and pinned around his waist. "I sat on my favorite chair and stared at the clock, waiting for something to happen," recalls Illot. "Within 30 minutes, my pain and tingling had decreased by 50 per cent. After 15 minutes, it had gone altogether. I was amazed."

Today Illot wears one of Farabloc's lower-back belts; he can even leave it off for three hours and remain pain-free. "I wake up in the morning and feel like jumping out of bed. I only wish I'd known about this years ago."

Chronic pain disables more people than cancer or heart disease. For many, their best hope lies with multidisciplinary clinics, which offer a variety of treatment options. However, in B.C., affordable resources are few. While there are publicly funded, hospital-based pain programs in Victoria, Vancouver and New Westminster, there's a year-long wait for an appointment at St. Paul's, B.C.'s premier pain centre. Today, the only way to guarantee free first-class pain management is to be seriously injured at work or in your car and meet strict compensation standards set by the WCB, ICBC and private insurers. If they can verify the pain to their satisfaction, they'll cover the cost of private programs aimed at returning you to work.



NERVES WITH STEEL: Frieder Kempe (left) invented a cloth that shields pain-sufferers like George Illot from electro-magnetic fields

