

Your health

Showing my scars for first time to honour my docs



Join our crucial appeal to save the lives of trauma victims

OUR Transform Trauma appeal backs Barts Charity to raise £1million to carry on trying to save the 50 people a day dying needlessly from trauma.

Karim Brohi, Consultant Surgeon and Professor of Trauma Sciences at Barts & The Royal London Hospital, explains the importance of research in this field, which is the biggest killer of people under 40.

He said: "Everyone knows someone who has been affected by trauma. It covers physical injury to the body and encompasses both its physical and mental consequences.

"This appeal is being launched to raise awareness and funds for trauma research and innovation.

"The aim is to save the lives of thousands of people who suffer trauma and to improve the lives of those who survive.

"Understanding the normal response to trauma and what excessive trauma does to the bodies of those surviving who would previously not have lived is one aspect. Some people respond differently to others, being able to explore that may also lead to new treatments."

HOW TO SUPPORT

If you knew an hour could save a life, what would you do? Give #1Hour this month and raise vital funds for Barts Charity's Transform Trauma appeal. Visit bartscharity.org.uk/1hour

Grace Havard, 23, of Chertsey, Surrey, thought her life was over when she suffered horrific injuries in a car crash. But it had only just begun...

“Every time I look in a mirror I see the scars of the day I’ll never remember – but that changed everything. They snake down my arms and legs, a constant reminder of how lucky I am to be here.

I broke 28 bones and was in an induced coma for a month after the freak accident in 2014. Apparently I clipped a curb at 60mph and swerved into oncoming traffic.

As the car flipped, I was dragged along the tarmac, taking all the skin off my right arm and leg down to the bone and I suffered devastating internal injuries. I owe my life to the trauma team at St George’s Hospital in Wandsworth, part of the London Major Trauma System.

Normally I wear long-sleeved tops when I go out. I even wear them to bed. But today, three years on, I’m bearing my scars in public, to pledge

my support for Barts Charity’s Transform Trauma Appeal, backed by the Sunday Mirror.

They are a mark of how far I have come – and how my life has changed for the better, though I didn’t know it at the time.

I’m a different person now. I feel like I’ve died and was born again. The memory loss is frustrating but I don’t look back any more. I’ve gone from being in a wheelchair to running the London Marathon and skydiving, and will soon abseil down the hospital that saved me. If I’m ever on my deathbed again, I want no regrets.

I spent three months in hospital after the accident. I had a split liver, bleeding spleen, failing kidneys, two punctured lungs and petrol burns.

I also needed multiple skin grafts to my right arm and thigh where the bone had been uncovered. But it was when I came home that it became

clear how severe my injuries were. I was unable to walk and had to relearn how to do everyday tasks like brushing my teeth, making a drink and climbing the stairs.

The scars were more than physical. I tried to deny it but I was a million per cent broken in mind as well as body. At my lowest point I didn’t want to be here.

I remember falling to my mum’s feet one day and saying to her, ‘If this is how my life is going to be, if this is how I’m going to feel every day, then I don’t want to live like that.’

But the fear of being a burden on my loved ones drove me back from the brink. I needed to stand on my own two feet again. I set myself small goals each day to regain confidence.

The real turning point was a two-week stint of intensive physio at Queen Mary’s, Roehampton. I arrived with a



VICTIM Grace fights for her life

limp. I had to use a stick to walk just 300 metres.

But after 14 days I’d run 5km in under 45 minutes on the rehab treadmill.

It was my lightbulb moment. I knew I was going to get my life back.

Running became my purpose. Every day I went a little further, or a little faster. Some days just doing it was an achievement. I vowed to run the London Marathon by 2020, but managed to complete it last year.

I tore a tendon in my foot at the 20 mile mark but I kept going and finished in just under six hours. Cheering me on were my family and

my fiancé Dan, 27, who proposed a year after the accident.

I thought I was going to get emotional crossing the finish line, but instead I felt the weight of the world had lifted off my shoulders. I could move on.

So many times I’ve been told by medical professionals how lucky I am, and how they don’t see people survive or recover the way I have. People with lesser injuries haven’t made it.

People don’t understand trauma and they don’t know how to talk about it. When I was feeling low, I wanted to see someone who had been through it, recovered and moved on with life.

If I could’ve seen myself now three years ago it would’ve saved me a lot of heartache and depression.

I hope I can be that person for somebody else.

As told to ANTONIA PAGET