

Stroke survivor John's moving story: 'Why more must be done to help people like me'

John Murphy's life was changed forever after he had a stroke on February 11, 2010 - and now he has written a book about it

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John Murphy of Cwmavon



A stroke survivor has said better post-stroke care should be provided for [stroke survivors in Wales](#).

John Paul Murphy, 47, from [Cwmavon, Port Talbot](#) suffered a stroke in February 2010.

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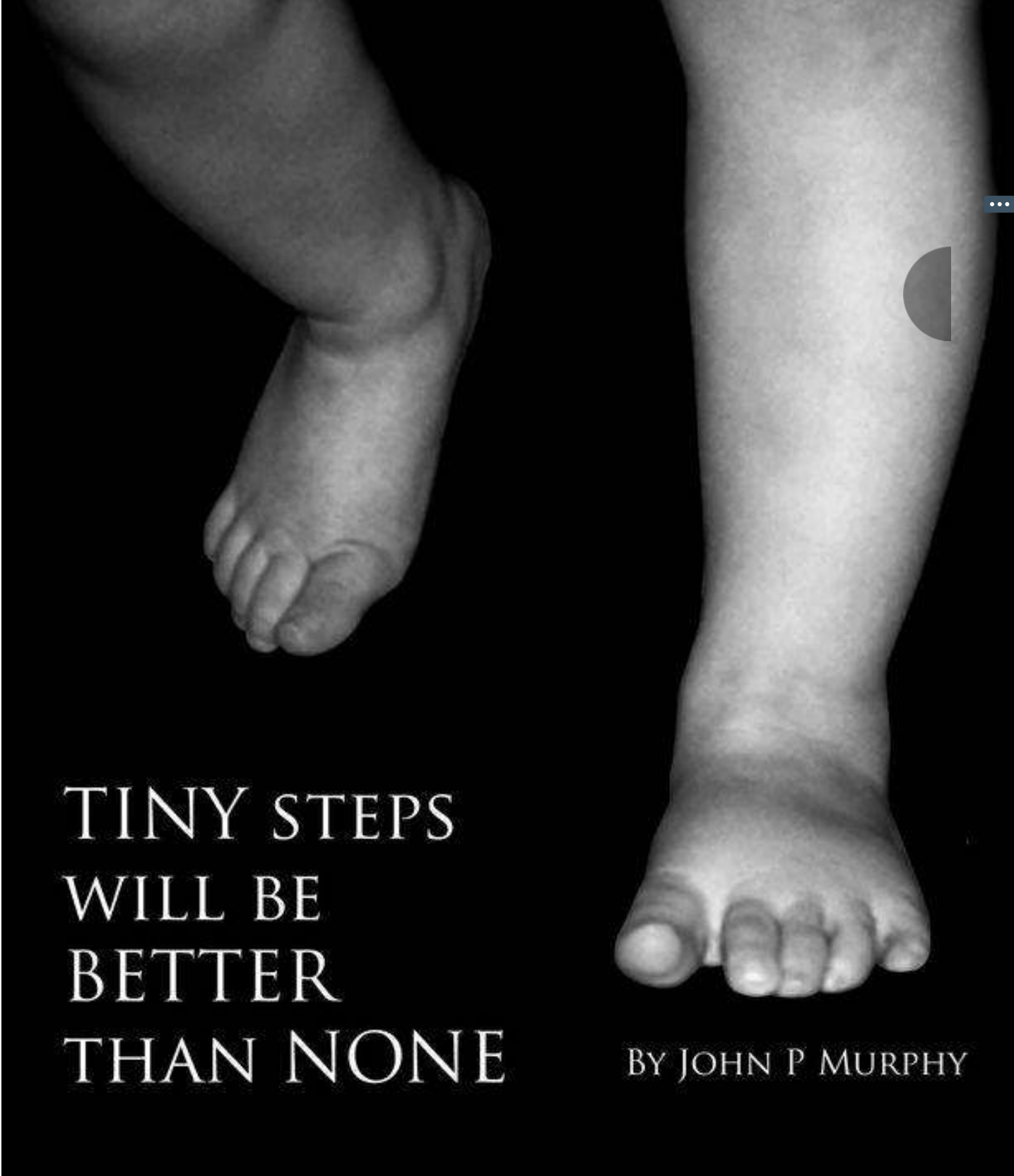
John, who was working as a driving instructor at the time, said: "It was a bleed on my brain which occurred as I was preparing for work five years ago on February 11.

He said: "I was in the garage trying to close the boot of my car and I knew something was not right. I couldn't close it with my left hand. Then I tried to get into the car and it was worse. I couldn't get my left leg in. It was all down my left side."

'Six months in hospital'


John, who weighted 28 stone at the time and was 5ft 11in, was taken to the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend. He was then transferred to Cimla Hospital in Neath for intensive physiotherapy. He said: "It was a fantastic unit but it is closed now."

After spending six months in hospital, John was discharged. He and his wife Angela had to move house to a property that was more suitable to John's needs.



 Tiny Steps Will Be Better Than None by John Paul Murphy is on sale now

Emotional rollercoaster

He said: "It was adapted even more about 18 months after we moved in, so 18 months of using a commode and washing in the kitchen sink" 

He said life after his stroke was an "emotional roller-coaster" as he had no balance and could not sit up.

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He said: "Emotions were a big problem post-stroke for me anyway. I was bursting into tears for no reason and on occasions felt depressed. I was struggling with a short-term memory and I was worse than a newborn baby trying to sit up.

"None of this was ever explained to me and I wished someone had, which is why I decided to write about my experiences in Tiny Steps Will Be Better Than None."

'The NHS can not give what they should'

John hopes this guide will help other stroke survivors, their families, and even staff.

He said: "My own struggle continues with rehabilitation every day, physiotherapy session four to five days a week.

"Most of my physio has to be private. The NHS can never give what they really should.

"I do feel that the NHS in Wales don't really provide post-hospital what they should. They'll quote money and resources as the problem, but I have met too many people who need better and are not getting it.

'We go without to pay for treatment'

"Most of us are paying for any extra therapy we can get. I am doing ARNI training. It's a stroke rehabilitation programme tailored to individual needs but it can cost over £40 per session. My wife and I go without sometimes so I can afford to go."

John's local health board, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU), is the first in Wales to implement ARNI training.

John said: "It's a shame it can't be rolled out across Wales and made affordable for all. We need to work together for a better future for all us stroke survivors here in Wales."



John had to move house following his stroke

A spokeswoman for ABMU Health Board said: "We recognise the benefits which stroke survivors have reported who have participated in the ARNI programme where it runs in parts of England. Therefore we are currently supporting a pilot of the ARNI programme in the Neath area."²

"Depending on the results, the evidence gathered could be used to support the development of the ARNI programme not only in the ABMU area but in NHS Wales."



A Welsh Government spokesman said: "Our latest stroke report shows that more people are surviving and fewer people are dying from stroke in Wales.

"More than 3,000 fewer people died from the effects of stroke between 2010 and 2012 than in 2002-04 thanks to improvements in Wales' stroke services.

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"We are determined to build on this with continuous improvement so we can ensure people of all ages, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances, have access to excellent NHS stroke care.

"Rehabilitation is a key part of this. Rehabilitation in the community and while in hospital, combined with early supported discharge services should be available to stroke patients and start as soon as possible and continue for as long as required."

Tiny Steps Will Be Better Than None can be purchased from rowanvalebooks.com and Amazon Kindle.

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