Implantable Drug Pump Enables Back Pain Sufferer To Go The Distance

(NAPSA)—Two years ago, Dave Crampton, 38, couldn't walk to the end of the block. Today he's running ultra-marathons thanks to a medical device that is implanted in his body to control his lower back pain.

In August 1995, Crampton injured his back while throwing a football. Diagnosed with a herniated disk, he underwent two surgical procedures, but nothing worked to eliminate the dull, aching pain that wrapped around his buttocks and lower leg. Initially treated with oral medication, Crampton soon found that the drugs induced fatigue, making it difficult for him to work, do household chores and participate in recreational activities.

"I take classes at night, and it reached the point where I was falling asleep in class and eating Percoset like candy," says Crampton. "I drive an hour to and from work, and the pain medication was making it difficult to drive and be alert. It says right on the pill bottle 'do not operate heavy machinery', but what does that mean? Don't support your family? I didn't have a choice. I have a family and a house payment just like everybody. You do what you have to."

Crampton was referred to Dr. Marc Loev, a pain specialist at The Center for Pain Management, LLC in Rockville, MD. "David was in intense pain," says Loev. "He couldn't walk to the end of the block without experiencing severe pain, and any activity including

sitting, exercising, coughing and sneezing increased the pain."

To relieve Crampton's pain, Dr. Loev implanted the Medtronic SynchroMed® infusion system, which consists of a programmable pump and flexible catheter. The SynchroMed pump is surgically placed under the skin to deliver morphine directly to the intrathecal space, a fluid-filled area surrounding the spinal cord. Because it is delivered directly to this space, only a fraction of the oral dose is needed to relieve the pain, resulting in fewer drug side effects.

Since being implanted with the pump in January 2000, Crampton has continued his work as an electrical applications engineer and is taking classes at night school. Before, back pain kept Crampton from exercising and fully participating in family life. Now he can once again play catch with his son, David, 10, and help his wife Barbara care for their five-month old daughter, Larayn. Crampton can now also pursue his favorite hobby—running.

"Running an ultra-marathon is something I've always wanted to do," says Crampton. "When I was in pain, I was really discouraged that I would never have an opportunity to achieve that goal. But, about six months after the pump implant, I started running again and building stamina. I talked to Dr. Loev about competing in an ultra-marathon and he said I could as long as I knew what I was doing and made sure I was comfortable."

Crampton finished the 50-mile marathon and plans to enter the event again next year to improve his time. "I twisted my ankle with about 20 miles to go and really had to slow down to a snail-paced jog. But I'm grateful I finished. I did not experience any back pain during or after the race, which is awesome!"

Results with this therapy vary. Not every patient responds to intrathecal drug delivery the way Crampton did. In addition, while Crampton does not experience any side effects with the therapy, they are possible. Because the pump and catheter are surgically placed, infections may occur. Problems may also occur with the pump and catheter. Some patients also experience drug-related side effects.

To learn more about intrathecal drug delivery and the SynchroMed infusion system, visit www.medtronicpain.com or call Medtronic Patient Services at 1-800-510-6735.