



Restoring symmetry

Correcting the profound facial asymmetry of a tumour patient non-surgically using collagen stimulating treatments

An acoustic neuroma is a non-cancerous and usually slow-growing tumour that develops on the main (vestibular) nerve leading from the inner ear to the brain. Branches of this nerve directly influence balance and hearing, and pressure from an acoustic neuroma can cause hearing loss, ringing in the ear, sleep apnoea and lack of co-ordination.

For Stevie Jenkins, the first sign of her acoustic neuroma occurred when she woke one morning, nine years ago, and found she was deaf in one ear. Initially, thinking it was an infection, she visited her doctor, who monitored her condition, and over the space of around a year, and multiple tests, Stevie was formally diagnosed and given regular, annual brain scans. At the time, Stevie lived with her husband and they both undertook volunteer work with underprivileged women in Thailand.

Three years after diagnosis, in 2012, Stevie woke one morning, and on getting out of bed, fell over. She felt drunk. Her latest brain scan had only taken place around eight months previously, however, during this time, Stevie's tumour

had grown significantly, wrapping itself around her facial nerve. Her balance was severely affected and the decision was taken to operate. Surgery lasted 15 hours. Much of the tumour was removed, however, the surgery transected her facial nerve and she was left with facial paralysis of around 60% initially, which reduced to a more 'acceptable' 35% after two years of facial exercises and massage – she said she looked like she had had a major stroke.

She was keen to reduce the effects her facial paralysis had on her appearance. Muscle relaxing injections with botulinum toxin helped a little, as did facial exercises, and slowly she began to see small improvements, but Stevie didn't like the look that the muscle relaxants had on her face and she didn't feel like herself.

In 2015, Stevie's husband was taken ill in Thailand and she nursed him tirelessly until he passed away, losing three stone in the process. Shortly after, she returned to England to try and rebuild her life. The stress and weight loss took their toll on Stevie's appearance and she felt as though her face had 'collapsed'.

Following her bereavement, Stevie was keen that people did not feel sorry for her. She freely admits that life has thrown a lot at her, but she knows she can deal with it. She joined an online support group, which she now runs, called Acoustic Neuroma Tumour Survivors (ANTS for short), which encourages members to discuss anything regarding their tumour and dealing with issues related to surgery.

"I write blogs for the group and one of my best received pieces was about grief. Not the grief of a passed loved one, but a grief many people with acoustic neuroma feel about the loss of the person they once were. It can take time to get used to what the condition has done to your appearance – our new normal. There are members of the group who are almost agoraphobic and I think it's important to discuss how we feel, and to share our experiences, not only of the condition, but, even more importantly, steps we have taken which may be life enhancing.

"I've always been keen to present a good image of myself. I am keen to look my best self and, for me, I want to look ordinary, like everyone else. I have recently met a new man and felt very strongly that when people meet us as a couple that they don't feel sorry for me, or think 'what is he doing with her?' I was recommended to visit a doctor-led aesthetics practice called River Aesthetics, which recommenced treatment to reduce the asymmetry of my face. This took around an hour and a half. The results were great immediately and actually got better over the next few weeks."

Dr Victoria Manning and Dr Charlotte Woodward of River Aesthetics, who treated her, explain, "When we first met Stevie and heard her story, we felt we had to help her and make a difference to her life. What we loved about her was her completely positive can-do attitude and the way she

used her experience to help others. However, caring for her husband with terminal cancer and having had an acoustic neuroma herself had taken quite a toll on her. She was left with a facial palsy and subsequent asymmetry which she found extremely embarrassing. She came to us initially not for a cosmetic enhancement but for a treatment to make her look and feel 'normal'. She has a new partner and she wanted to look the best she could.

"At rest she had marked asymmetry on the left side, with loss of volume and a general ptosis of the midface.

The asymmetry was heightened on animation. She'd had a blepharoplasty previously to try and help the hooding that she had but she said when tired she developed a ptosis that affected her vision. She also had a deep scar on her chin from having her head clamped in a brace through the extensive surgery.

"As this was a complex case, a multidisciplinary case meeting was held to discuss potential treatment plans to ensure the best outcomes were achieved for her. We opted to correct her profound asymmetry using Ellansé collagen stimulating dermal filler and tried to balance Stevie's face both at rest and in animation. Small boluses were deposited in the deep medial cheek fat pad on the left side to balance the volume deficit, in addition to supporting the lateral cheek using a cannula. At her first appointment, 3mls of product was used.

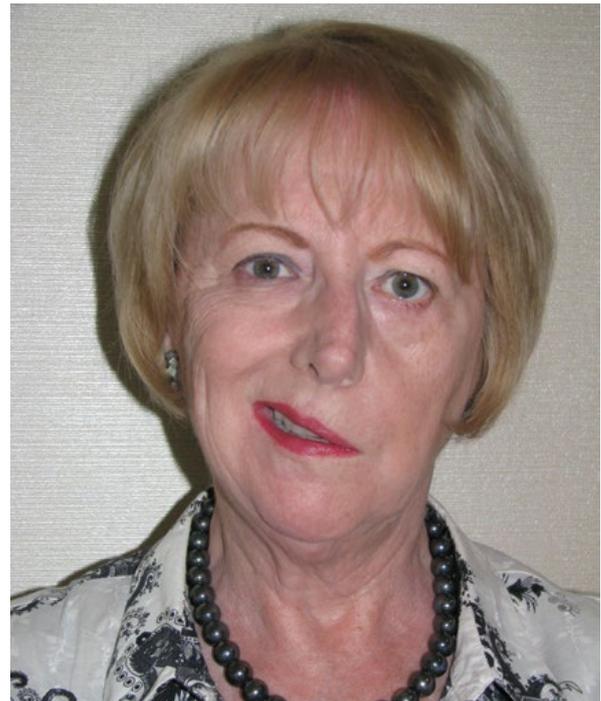
"For life-changing treatments like these, our ethos is to develop the effects and improvements over time so a phased approach is often adopted in our practice.

Interestingly Stevie felt that her left eye felt supported straight after treatment. At her three month review we tweaked the jaw line, jowls and marionettes with an additional 3ml of Ellansé and inserted a single eight cone >

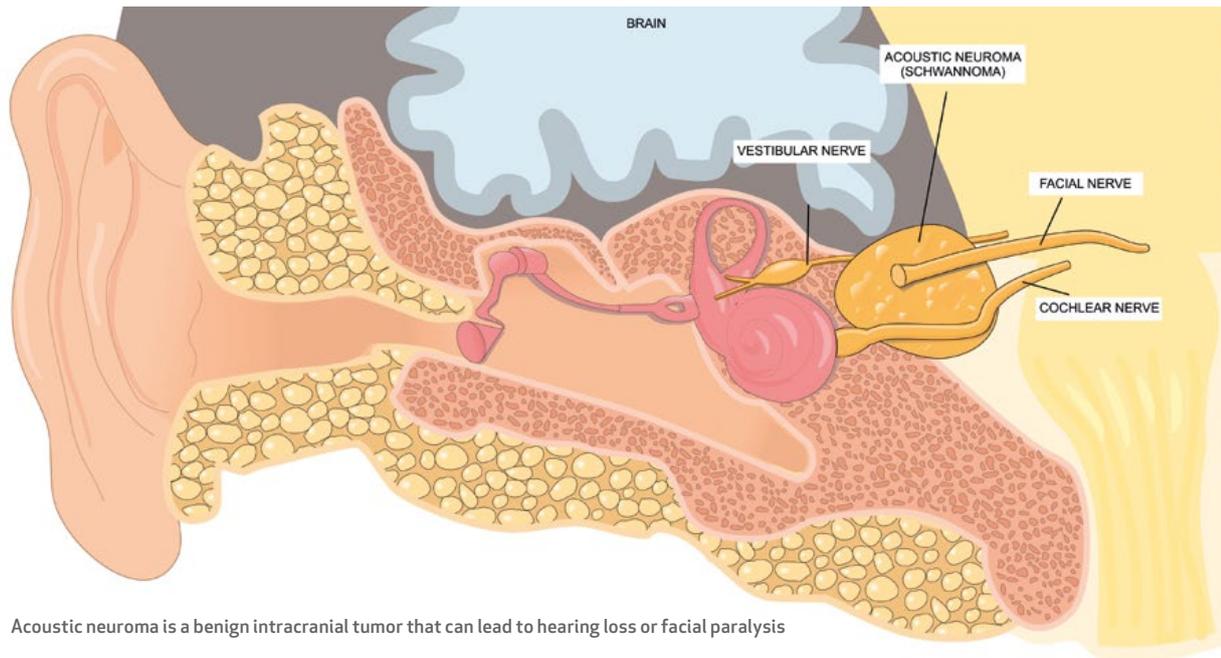
I'm keen to increase awareness about the treatment options for people with acoustic neuroma. There is no need to hide away



Before



15 weeks into treatment



Acoustic neuroma is a benign intracranial tumor that can lead to hearing loss or facial paralysis

Silhouette Soft suture in her left brow to support the lateral aspect of her left eye. Not to overtly lift the brow but to help maintain the eye position when the muscle tired. A total volume of 6mls Ellansé M was used and 1 Silhouette Suture®.

The two non-surgical treatments used in Stevie's treatment come from the Sinclair Pharma portfolio. Ellansé is the first dermal filler which provides both instant and gradual results; increased volume occurs immediately post-treatment, however volumisation continues to develop for up to four months as the initial carrier gel is absorbed by the body, but not before microscopic spheres suspended in the gel have stimulated the body to create its own healing collagen. The results can last for up to four years.

Silhouette Soft threads initiate a unique two-stage process – an immediate skin lift and gradual collagen regeneration. Think of it as the creation of scaffolding for drooping areas of the face. The threads, which are dotted with a series of tiny cones along their length, are introduced just under the top layer of the skin. The cones are bi-directional which secures the threads in place in the subcutaneous layer and allows them to be pulled in two directions to lift the skin.

The threads and cones are made from polylactic acid, which is the same material as dissolvable stitches, and in the ensuing three months before they are absorbed by the body they bring about the process of collagenesis. This is the method the body uses to repair a damaged area – in this case created by the agitation of the cones. This brings about a biological lift, where the skin becomes firmer and tighter as a result of the augmentation from newly laid down collagen underneath the surface to fill it out naturally.

Stevie concludes, "Since treatment my confidence has built steadily. I met my new man's friends for the first time recently and was so pleased to feel I looked normal. I am now



After

ready to face the world feeling good about myself. People have even commented that I look glamorous which has really boosted my confidence further. I am buying brighter coloured clothes, I am more sociable and happier to meet new people; confident people aren't feeling sorry for me."

"I'm keen to increase awareness about the treatment options for people with acoustic neuroma. There is no need for them to hide away because they don't want others to see them. I did have the option of major surgery to correct some of my concerns, but results can take years and I know that some suffer with horrendous scarring. I'm so pleased there was a non-surgical option – it's been so life-enhancing for me." **AM**



Dr Victoria Manning and Dr Charlotte Woodward are award-winning facial aesthetics doctors. Dr Manning has a special interest in non-surgical face lifts and is a national trainer for PDO threads. She also has great skill treating with Silhouette Soft threads and is a national trainer for Sinclair Pharma. Dr Woodward is a national trainer for Ellansé. Their ethos is less is more and they aspire to help patients look refreshed rather than 'done'.