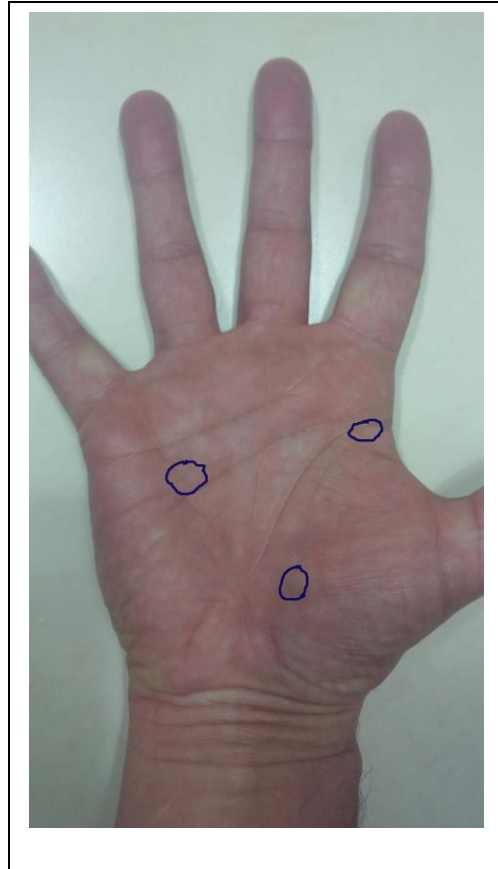


April 2013, 2 1/2 years after completing my second series of radiation treatments for my left hand, I considered myself cured. I was luckily one out of every 3 or 4 patients who actually experience some reversal of the disease. One of my first nodules disappeared, the others all reduced in size a bit and softened, one of the hard cords returned to normal and the rest of them softened, and I can once again stretch my hand out flat and as wide as before Dupuytren's first appeared.

However, after 2 ½ years, I suddenly noticed Dupuytren's nodules in my right hand. As you can see from the photo, it was in a very early stage. However, I am very dominant right-handed and I found this discovery much more distressing than the experience with my left hand.

My first thought was "I guess I'm going back to Hamburg." As it happened, I already had a trip to Europe planned and an appointment with Professor Seegenschmiedt just to visit and have a quick follow-up. So I emailed him with descriptions, measurements, explanations, and photos and he agreed that I should schedule a week in Hamburg as it appeared that I would probably need treatment.



The nodule below my ring finger grew and hardened over the next several weeks while hard cords and other nodules began to appear. As I realize it is never a good idea to diagnose yourself, although Professor Seegenschmiedt agreed with my diagnosis, I did go to see my family doctor, looking for his confirmation. And he immediately agreed that it was Dupuytren's and recommended, based on the wonderful results from my other hand, that I should go to Hamburg for treatment.

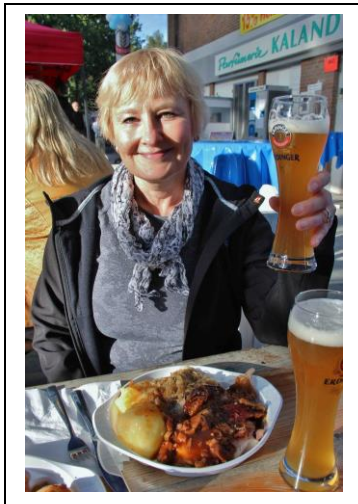
At this time, I was unaware if any doctors in Canada had begun doing RT for Dupuytren's and as Hamburg fit into my travel plans anyway, I did not even consider looking closer to home for treatment. Since then, I have noticed on the forum website that a doctor in Kelowna, BC (my original home town) and another in Calgary, AB (close to where I live now) are listed as currently providing RT for Dupuytren's. Regardless, Professor Seegenschmiedt is the world authority and has treated well over 1,000 cases of Dupuytren's so I would always feel much more comfortable and confident with that kind of expertise.

I travelled to Hamburg on Saturday, September 14, 2013 and once again stayed at the Courtyard Marriott Airport Hotel. Nothing much has changed there other than Andreas is no longer working in their bar, but Mustafa is still there. And as usual all of the staff were very warm and helpful and more of them speak English now.

We wandered around the neighbourhood a bit and discovered that the nearby corner grocery store has closed but we found two other larger grocery stores within a 20 minute walk of the hotel. We also found three inexpensive and very good restaurants within very short walking distance.

I have to admit that although I was going to be starting radiation for the third time, I was still a little nervous. After the last time, three years ago, my skin dried up and got leathery and even though it's not high doses and just on my hand, I had NO energy for nearly a year, falling asleep every afternoon. The doctor said I shouldn't have much side effects but I sure did. My blood tests showed a big drop in my white cell count and it's still not quite back up to normal.

Three years ago I published my experience on the Dupuytren's Forum website [http://www.dupuytren-online.info/Roger\\_Hamburg\\_RT.htm](http://www.dupuytren-online.info/Roger_Hamburg_RT.htm) and I still get emails every week from new Dupuytren's patients asking how I'm doing and my advice on treatments in Germany. I have referred so many people here that the doctor says they all think of me as family at the clinic as they hear my name from patients every week! :)



Sunday evening, Chris and I walked over towards the clinic, stopping at Langenhorner Market to find an early Oktoberfest party going on. We stopped

there for some great traditional German meals and beer.

Monday morning was raining as we walked the 2 km or so to the clinic. We arrived as they opened at 8:00AM, just in time for my appointment with Professor Seegenschmiedt only to be told I was actually in their

calendar only at 12:30. The professor's home is not in Hamburg; he stays there Monday through Thursday nights only, so his earliest Monday appointments normally begin around noon.

So now I had over four hours to wander the streets and think about my treatment. Luckily there is a nearby McDonald's so we relaxed there with coffee and Egg McMuffins and read tourism brochures for a while before heading off to walk around the neighbourhood.

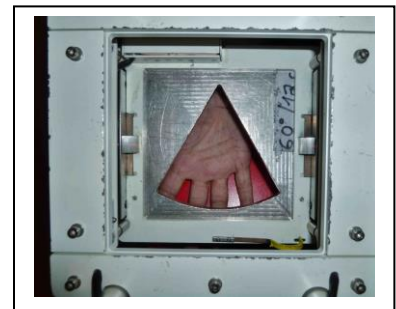
As this is my third time here there wasn't much new to see so the time moved pretty slowly. We actually returned to the clinic at 11:30 at their suggestion but I didn't get called in until nearly 12:30 anyway.

So the professor confirmed that my left hand, treated three years ago, has remarkably improved (only about 1 in 4 people ever show any improvement) quite a lot. My feet, which had showed early indications three years ago, have not changed at all. But the Dupuytren's in my right hand has progressed a lot and seems to be advancing rapidly. So the doctor determined the area to be radiated and told me to come back in a couple hours for my first treatment.



Chris and I walked to the nearby Langenhorner Market and found a great restaurant for lunch with donairs, salads, etc. I ordered a donair (in my “perfect” German) and received some kind of chick pea patties and rice (which I'm allergic to). Okay, so maybe I need to practise my German a bit more. Chris ordered salad and ..... got salad! Anyway, I ate the chick pea thing and it wasn't all that bad.

So back at the clinic, they have you wait in a small waiting room for a few minutes then call you and direct you down two floors to the radiation treatment rooms. They make you wait in a little closet then come in and take a photo of your face. Then they come back in a few minutes and explain my daily treatment routine and their hours. Then they come back a few minutes later and finally call you in for treatment. It took a few minutes to set things up for the exact target area on my hand. They say that the radioactive area is very specific and there is no spillover. It takes only 30 seconds and you do not feel a thing.



We had a nice supper in the hotel that evening (very good restaurant here, “the Concorde”) and then had after-dinner drinks at their bar (Bar Saturn) and the bartender Mustafa remembered me from three years ago. I don't remember spending THAT much time in the bar, so he MUST have a GREAT memory! :)

Everything at the clinic looked pretty much the same as three years earlier other than a new sign out front. It includes a mention of their new Cyberknife which is a very pinpoint type of radiation treatment used for a variety of treatments requiring extremely accurate and small areas of radiation treatments. Dupuytren's is just one of many diseases that they treat there.



Another change is that they have a world map on the wall in one of the waiting rooms with small flag pins stuck into it from all of the Dupuytren's patients he's treated from all over the world. Make sure you ask at the reception counter for a pin to mark your own home town.

Tuesday morning we slept in a bit but made it to the clinic by about 10:30. They sent me straight in for my treatment and we were walking back out of there in less than five minutes. We walked over to the same place for lunch. I pointed to the big donair meat spit thing and asked the guy if that was for donairs. He said yes, I ordered a donair, and .... I got a donair! And it was great! Worth the wait. Chris had their lentil soup and said that was really good too.

Wednesday we walked to the clinic and I was in and out in a few minutes so we had the rest of the day free. Thursday I had an appointment with the professor for 11:00AM for final directions and payment. He usually does this Friday morning but wasn't going to be available then. We arrived at 10:45 for my radiation then met with the professor for about 30 minutes. He had a quick look at my hand then gave me some information about avoiding stress and strain, including heat or chemical, and presented me with the bill for the initial consultation, examination and first week of treatments. As I chose to pay by credit card, one of the girls on the front reception counter takes you upstairs to an office to process the credit card payment.

Friday morning was the usual quick in and out treatment then I was done for three months.

It was actually closer to four months before I was able to return for my second week of treatments, beginning Monday, January 13, 2014. My hand looked little different at this point. I had been moisturizing daily so didn't notice any dryness. The colour hadn't changed much other than the lines in my hand were all very dark.

I met with Professor Seegenschmiedt Monday at about 12:30 for a short examination. He confirmed that there had been no change in the Dupuytren's since September. As the radiation masks and treatment details were to be the same as in September, they were ready for me as soon as I wanted to begin.

So Monday through Thursday was the usual pattern, wait a few minutes in the waiting room until they call you, then you go downstairs to the radiation room. You wait a few minutes there until they call you in, treat you for about 30 seconds, and you're on your way.

Friday I had my end of treatment meeting with the professor scheduled for about 11:00AM so I arrived at 10:45AM, had my radiation treatment, then I met with the professor for about 30 minutes. He gave me a package including a letter outlining all of the details of his examination, the radiation treatments, copies of his exam diagrams and forms for me to fill out for follow-up emails to him at 90 days, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years. He also gave me the final bill for the second week of radiation and as usual, I went upstairs with one of the front counter girls to pay by credit card in an office. We left the clinic then, hopefully, for the last time.

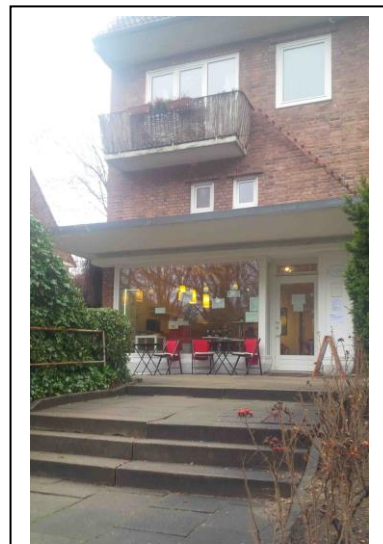
During both trips, September and January, the weather was cool and rainy so we didn't walk around as much as previously. But I did discover some great restaurants near the hotel as well as two downtown; one recommended by another Dupuytren's patient on the forum. On Professor Seegenschmiedt's recommendation, we visited Miniatur Wunderland <https://www.miniatur-wunderland.com/> which was quite amazing. Allow yourself at least 2 hours, 3 or 4 if you have kids with you, to view this huge miniature world including the largest model railway system in the world and a fantastic working airport.

As I write this, it is now February 16, 2014, four weeks since I completed my second week of radiation treatments. I am having some trouble with mouth sores as I did three years ago but once again, an anti-bacterial mouthwash is clearing that up. My hand needs daily moisturizer as the skin dries out otherwise and the skin has taken on a bit of a leathery feel. My hand is slightly darker than the other one and the lines are especially dark. I've noticed no change, for good or bad, in the nodules or cords. My left hand continues to be "cured" from my treatments in 2010.

Please feel free to email me at [rogermirka1@gmail.com](mailto:rogermirka1@gmail.com) with any questions.



Rotbuche. Authentic, very old German Pub/restaurant, 2 blocks north of the Marriott. Great food and atmosphere and English menu available.



Lusitania. Nice spot for a light lunch, 3 short blocks west of the Marriott, across from the tube station.



The Taj Mahal. A very nice, authentic East Indian restaurant about a 10 minute walk south of the Marriott, on Langenhorner Chaussee.



The Asia Wok. Great eat-in or take-out restaurant about a 15 minute walk south of the Marriott, on Langenhorner Chaussee. Great selection; very good Sushi, lots of vegetarian dishes and great Thai



Netto grocery store. About a 20 minute walk south of the Marriott, on Langenhorner Chaussee. Good selection including wine, very reasonable prices. There is another Netto in Langenhorner Market, on the way to the clinic.



Hofbräu Wirtshaus restaurant, downtown Hamburg, (Speersort 1). A busy restaurant with lots of locals, serving traditional German meals. English menu available.



Altstädter Stube restaurant (Altstädter Straße 17) in downtown Hamburg. A very small, inexpensive hole-in-the-wall place with great food. The owner is the cook and waiter and very willing to accommodate any special needs.