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### **Erthygl i'r Wasg Press Release**

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## Y llawfeddyg sy'n gweld sêr wedi profi dwy ochr i'r gyllell

Mae'r tair blynedd a hanner diwethaf wedi bod yn daith 'rollercoaster' gorfforol, emosiynol a meddyliol i Neil Hopper, llawfeddyg o Gymro sydd bellach wedi ymsefydlu yn Truro yng Nghernyw.

Llawfeddyg fasgiwlar ydi Neil, sef un sy'n arbenigo mewn trychiadau (*amputations*). Mae'r ffaith iddo ef ei hun felly golli ei ddwy goes i sepsis yn 2019 yn eironig o greulon a dweud y lleiaf. Dyma lawfeddyg oedd wedi perfformio cannoedd o drychiadau ar hyd ei yrfa yn gorfol wynebu'r gyllell ei hun. Mewn rhaglen ddogfen arbennig, **Drych: Camau Tua'r Sêr** ar nos Sul 26 Chwefror, cawn ddysgu am yr effaith gafodd colli ei goesau arno ef, a chawn ddilyn ei waith dydd i ddydd fel llawfeddyg. Cawn hefyd glywed am ran arall o storï'i fywyd diweddar, sef y ffaith iddo gael ei ddewis ar gyfer y broses o reciwtio parastronaut (astronot gydag anabledd) gan yr Asiantaeth Ofod Ewropeaidd.

Ar ôl cyfnod o driniaeth yn dilyn y sepsis, collodd Neil fysedd ei draed a llawer o groen ar waelod ei draed, felly penderfynwyd ar drychiadu (*amputation*).

"Roedd arwyddo'r *consent forms*, wel does dim geirie da fi i ddisgrifio beth oedd e fel" meddai Neil. "Ond dwi'n cofio, yn fy mhen, ro'n i'n dychmygu'r llawdriniaeth, oherwydd dyna be' dwi'n neud, a jest i feddwl bod *power tools* am gael ei ddefnyddio arna i fy hun - roedd hwna'n rhywbeth anodd ei brosesu".

"O'n i yn Ysbyty am ryw 6 neu 7 wythnos. Roedd y newidiadau yn fy nghorff, y rhai *physical* yn weddol hawdd i'w deall, ond beth o'n i ddim yn deall oedd y newidiadau seicolegol a pa mor galed oedd e jest i ffitio nôl i mewn i fywyd teulu.

Daeth tro ar fydd pan dderbyniodd Neil goesau prosthetig:

"Ro'n i'n dechrau meddwl byddwn i byth yn medru mynd nôl i'r gwaith, byddwn i byth yn medru chwarae pêl-droed efo Harry, cerdded 'da'r ci ar y traeth - dyna'r math o *mindset* o'dd gen i. Ond unwaith ges i 'nghoesau, na'th pethau newid dros nos, na'th y dyfodol ddechrau edrych yn well.

Ar y pryd, dywedwyd wrtho y byddai'n well iddo ail-ystyried ei yrfa, gan na fyddai'n "ymarferol bosib" iddo ddychwelyd i'r theatr.

"O'n i'n benderfynol o fynd yn ôl at y gwaith" meddai Neil. "O'n ishe profi bod e'n holol holol anghywir. Trwy fy ngyrfa dwi wastad wedi trio dychmygu be oedd e fel i gael amputation, achos dwi wedi gwneud y llawdriniaeth ar bobl eraill, felly doeddwn i ddim yn disgwyl cael yr ateb.

"D'wi di cael cyfle i weld beth ma' fe fel ochr arall y gyllell. Mae fy mhrofiad wedi neud i mi feddwl fwy am sut dwi'n cyfathrebu efo 'nghleifion. Dwi'n credu bod o wedi 'ngwneud i'n ddoctor gwell.

Yn Chwefror 2021, daeth galwad gan yr Asiantaeth Ofod Ewropeaidd am bobol i lenwi swydd astronot oedd newydd gael ei hysbysebu, am y tro cyntaf ers dros ddegawd, fel rhan o'u Parastronaut Feasibility Project.

Ac yntau wedi bod â diddordeb mawr mewn pethau yn ymwneud â'r gofod erioed, roedd y rôl yn taro deuddeg, a phenderfynodd Neil lenwi'r ffurflen gais. Ym mis Rhagfyr 2021, cafodd glywed ei fod wedi cael ei ddewis ar gyfer y broses reciwtio.

"Pan weles i'r hysbyseb gan yr European Space Agency am para astronaut, sef astronaut efo anabledd o'dd raid i fi roi cais i mewn. Roedd y criteria'n eitha' penodol; roedd rhaid cael doctorate peirianeg neu feddygaeth, odd raid cael anabledd islaw'r pen-glin, ac roedd rhaid siarad ail iaith - hei, Cymraeg! Ar y dechrau roedd fy ngwraig Rachel yn meddwl mod i'n holol wallgo"!

Yn y rhaglen cawn ddilyn argraffiadau Neil o'r daith reciwtio, a dilyn ei antur yn ei ymdrech i gyrraedd y gofod – ond a fydd yn llwyddo?

**Drych: Camau Tua'r Sêr**

**Dydd Sul, 26 Chwefror 9.00 S4C**

**Isdeitlau Cymraeg a Saesneg**

**Ar alw: S4C Clic; BBC iPlayer a llwyfannau eraill**

**Cynhyrchiad Cwmni Da ar gyfer S4C**

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## The star-gazing surgeon who experienced two sides of the knife

The last three and a half years have been a physical, emotional and mental rollercoaster for Neil Hopper, a surgeon from Wales who has now settled in Truro in Cornwall.

Neil is a vascular surgeon who specialises in amputations. The fact that he himself lost both his legs to sepsis in 2019 has been an ironic, cruel twist to his tale to say the least - a surgeon who had performed hundreds of amputations throughout his career having to face the knife himself.

In a special documentary, **Drych: Camau Tua'r Sêr** on Sunday 26 February, we'll learn about the effect the loss of his legs has had on him, and we follow his day-to-day work as a surgeon. We will also hear about another recent part of his life's story - the fact that he was chosen for the process of recruiting a para astronaut (an astronaut with a disability) by the European Space Agency.

After a period of treatment following the sepsis, Neil lost his toes and much of the skin on the underneath his feet, so amputation was decided upon.

"Signing the consent forms – well, there aren't words to describe how I felt," said Neil. "I remember imagining the operation – operations which I do all the time, and thinking that power tools were going to be used on me. That was really difficult to process."

"I was in hospital for about six or seven weeks. The physical changes in my body were fairly easy to understand, but what I didn't understand were the psychological changes and how hard it was just to fit back into family life."

A turning point came when Neil received prosthetic legs:

"I was starting to think I'd never be able to go back to work, I'd never be able to play football with Harry, walk the dog on the beach - that's the kind of mindset I had. But once I got legs, things started to change overnight, the future didn't look so bleak."

At the time, he was told that he had better reconsider his career, as it would not be "possible or practical" for him to return to the theatre.

"I was determined to go back to work," says Neil. "I wanted to prove that they were completely wrong. Throughout my career I'd always tried to imagine what it was like to have an amputation, so I didn't expect to get the answer."

"You won't have a chance to see what it's like on the other side of the knife. My experience has made me think more about how I communicate with patients. I believe it has made me a better doctor."

In February 2021, a call came from the European Space Agency for people to fill the newly advertised astronaut position, for the first time in over a decade, as part of their Parastronaut Feasibility Project.

Having always had a great interest in things related to space, the role struck a chord, and Neil decided to apply. In December 2021, he was told that he had been selected for the recruitment process.

"When I saw the advertisement from the European Space Agency for a para astronaut, I had to put in an application. The criteria were quite specific; you had to have a doctorate in engineering or medicine, you had to have a disability below the knee, and you had to speak a second language - hey, Welsh! At first my wife Rachel thought I was completely crazy!"

In the programme we get to follow Neil's recruitment journey, and follow his adventure in his effort to reach space - but will he succeed?

**Drych: Camau Tua'r Sêr**  
**Sunday, 26 February, S4C**  
**English and Welsh subtitles**  
**On demand: S4C Clic; BBC iPlayer and other platforms**  
**A Cwmni Da production for S4C**