

**Client:** University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust  
**Source:** Western Daily Press (Late City) (Main)  
**Date:** 02 February 2010  
**Page:** 6  
**Reach:** 36085  
**Size:** 516cm2  
**Value:** 1475.76



**Feeling it:** Professor Andy Levy has designed a sensation device which is due to be rolled out to hospitals across the country

Picture: Michael Lloyd

**Client:** University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust  
**Source:** Western Daily Press (Late City) (Main)  
**Date:** 02 February 2010  
**Page:** 6  
**Reach:** 36085  
**Size:** 516cm2  
**Value:** 1475.76

# Good vibrations will help diabetics lead a better life

**Vicki Mathias**  
wdnews@bepp.co.uk

A simple gift of an electronic razor from a wife to her husband has given birth to a device which could potentially save hundreds of diabetes sufferers from having limbs amputated.

Three years after first coming up with the idea to test the sensitivity of people suffering with diabetes, Professor Andy Levy's Vibratip has been manufactured and 30,000 of the devices have been purchased by a company.

Doctors have used tuning forks to assess sensation but the professor of endocrinology, based in Bristol, wanted to develop something easier and more effective for clinicians to carry.

Diabetic patients who have lost sensation in their feet can injure themselves, sometimes to the point where they require amputation, by standing on glass or stones, or suffering burns.

Prof Levy came up with the idea of the Vibratip after his wife gave him a Gillette Fusion Power razor, which uses battery power to vibrate its five blades for a closer shave.

He said: "When I received the vibrating razor, I thought to myself I could use the handle without the top as a source of vibration and something that students could put in the tool kits I hand out to them."

He worked out how to make a similar device in the shed at his Stoke Bishop home.

Prof Levy took his idea to the innovation team at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, where he

works as a consultant. He created several prototypes at home and then was helped by a designer and eventually was put in touch with the company

that has gone on to manufacture the Vibratip, McCallan.

The initial idea dates back to Christmas 2006 and will soon be launched as the finished product.

Prof Levy said: "It will mean more feet on diabetic legs and is going to do everyone good."

The Vibratip is smaller than a thumb and can fit in a pocket so that it is easily at hand, unlike a tuning fork.

Prof Levy, who teaches at

Bristol University, is involved in research, and is a consultant undertaking ward rounds and clinics at Bristol Royal Infirmary, said: "Tuning forks are very big and very cold and you have to push quite hard to get a sound."

"Patients also tend to respond by giving the right answers because they can see and hear the tuning fork and know they should feel it."

Prof Levy previously won a Bristol University innovation award for the Vibratip and has since won another competition at UHBristol for another of his inventions, which is in the process of being made.

The competition, which was the brainchild of UHBristol's innovation leader, Rachel Clark, was a chance for all levels of NHS staff to showcase their ideas and compete for the chance to see them ad-

opted by the trust as well as the wider NHS. The Vibratip is one of the first products she has been involved with through to development.

Her role involves helping NHS staff through the process of applying for patents and finding commercial backers.

She said: "We take a local opportunity and improvement and make it available to the wider NHS so it can benefit patients everywhere."

Money made through products designed by NHS staff and developed with sup-

port from the trust and its associated charities is then re-invested within the hospitals.

Prof Levy also makes mannequins in his shed so student doctors throughout the world can practise some of their skills on realistic models. All money he makes is used for research at the university.

Innovation to benefit all

