

## Case study from Brazil

### Luciana Novaes



Photo: Raquel Dias

**“I was studying to be a nurse when I was shot inside my university... Now others care for me round the clock”.**

“My name is Luciana Novaes and I am 22 years old. I was a nursing student at Estacio de Sá University in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil until 5 May 2003 when I was hit in the neck by a stray bullet fired from somewhere outside.

At the time, I was inside the university, having a snack with a friend on a break between two tests.

I have no memory of being shot. All I recall was waking up at the hospital, being confronted with the horror of what had happened. It was an awful moment. I was just 19 years old at the time. I had just been offered two jobs, and was planning to start working in addition to my studies.

Instead, I spent the next year and nine months in hospital. The last six months of this time were spent waiting to be moved to a new home, more suited to accommodate my many needs.

Doctors explained to me that the bullet had entered the left side of my jaw, destroying a vertebrae and lodging itself in my spinal column. Now I move in a wheelchair and a machine makes it possible for me to breathe.

I was told the bullet came from a security guard’s gun, but the real story was never uncovered, the culprit never found. There was a trial, and the University has to pay some compensation – but so far, all I received was this house, on loan.

The accident interrupted all my dreams. My parents care for me around the clock; nurses come to me for twice daily physiotherapy sessions. My sister Jo leaves her three children everyday to come and help.

My favourite thing was going to the beach and the gym. Now I read and watch TV from my chair. But I have faith. The doctors had told me I would never speak or eat again. Now I can do both things. I believe I will keep getting better. My aim is to be able to

breathe without help. When I do that, I will be able to move around more easily and not be so homebound. Hope should be the last thing to die.”