



Pinnacle Orthopaedics: Futuristic Surgical Technology Today

Baby-boomers who grew up watching sci-fi shows where surgical procedures were instantaneous and recovery nearly immediate are increasingly becoming the beneficiaries of similar futuristic medical technology. Procedures such as hip and knee replacements are escalating as our population ages. More than 250,000 knee replacement operations are performed in the United States annually, and this number is rising dramatically, in part because aging baby boomers are heavier and more active, and consequently are putting more wear and tear on their aging joints. Corresponding with this increase in surgeries is a rapid evolution in surgical technology.

A recent recipient of a hip replacement, Arlene Andre of Acworth, says she never could have even imagined the advances in surgical technology. The 57-year-old grandmother first visited Dr. Stan Dysart, a director at the Pinnacle Orthopaedics Research Institute in Marietta, in the fall of 2002 complaining of shooting pains running down her thigh. Upon examining her and taking x-rays, he advised her that her hip joint was deteriorating and she would eventually need hip replacement surgery. "For the next year, it kept getting worse despite physical therapy and medications. I could hardly sleep at night because of the pain, and I finally reached the point where something had to be done," Andre explains.

In the interim, Dysart fine-tuned an innovative surgical procedure that is far less invasive than the standard hip replacement procedure. Fortunately for Andre when the time came for her surgery, she proved to be a good candidate.

"In case I wasn't a candidate, they prepared me for the worse – a four-day hospital stay, a 12-inch incision, an extended

recovery. When I woke up, the first thing I wanted to know was if I got the mini procedure. They told me I did. That meant I had a four-inch incision and a two-day hospital stay. It also meant I had less pain, needed less pain medication and could get back on my feet quicker. Within two months I was back to feeling like my old self, only better than I had in nearly two years. When I look at that little incision—I'm blown away. I still can't believe Dr. Dysart was able to do all that with such a small incision."

Benefits of Minimally Invasive Surgery

Dysart, one of the foremost knee and hip surgeons in the country, says that results like Andre's are not uncommon. "Minimally Invasive Surgery (MIS) is a dramatic improvement over prior surgical procedures for hip and knee replacement. Mrs. Andre proved to be an excellent candidate. Not every patient is though. Patients that are too heavy or patients needing re-do procedures or that have other complications are generally not good candidates."

According to Dysart the benefits of MIS are numerous:

- Decreased bleeding
- Decreased operative time
- Decreased hospital stay
- Decreased pain
- Decreased scarring
- Faster rehabilitation
- Increased patient satisfaction.

Computer Assisted Surgery

Refining his surgical procedures is an ongoing process, according to Dysart, and minimally invasive procedures are just one of the recent innovations in hip and knee replacement surgeries. Another recent significant improvement in the evolution of knee and hip surgeries is the use of computers to better align knees and hips.

"In addition to performing the surgery via a smaller incision, we want to make the procedure more accurate. We know that poorly aligned hip and knee proce-

Causes of Problem Joints

- Osteoarthritis
- Inflammatory arthritis
- Fracture
- Necrosis (reduction of blood supply to the bone caused by a bad injury or long-term use of alcohol or steroids.)

Benefits of Knee or Hip Replacement

- End or reduction in pain
- Improved quality of life
- Years of greater mobility
- Increased leg strength

dures fail sooner. The computer-navigated surgery permits more accurate surgery since the bone cuts for total hip and total knee surgery are performed with computer guidance. The resulting knee or hip is better aligned, and the hope is that a better aligned hip or knee will perform better in the long term."

Actively involved with the American Academy of Orthopaedics Surgeons and numerous other medical research associations, Dysart is poised on the forefront of the emerging surgical evolution, pioneering innovative procedures, and publishing and presenting scientific articles at local and national orthopaedic surgery meetings.

He is excited about the opportunities and challenges ahead and what this means to his patients. "We're increasingly able to dramatically improve the long-term quality of our patients' lives while minimizing the short-term effects of surgery."

Reach Pinnacle Orthopaedics at one of these convenient locations: Marietta, 770-427-5717; Austell, 770-944-3303; Douglasville, 770-949-8558; Woodstock, 770-926-9112; East Cobb, 770-579-8558.

Lorayne B. Weizenecker is a local freelance writer and frequent contributor to Cobb Living, North Fulton Living and Cherokee Living magazines.

