

by Laurie Entekin

SUFFERING FROM ARTHRITIC JOINTS

WANT YOUR LIFE BACK?

WellStar's Center for Joint Replacement
Delivers High Standards and Predictable Outcomes

Is hip, knee or shoulder pain restricting your enjoyment of daily activities? With the latest advancements in joint replacement surgery, most Americans suffering from osteoarthritis can be assured of relief of pain and the ability to live a fuller, more active life. In fact, according to national statistics, 90 percent of patients experience good to excellent results following the replacement of a troublesome joint.

While jogging on an arthritic knee is a recipe for disaster, walking, swimming, biking, hiking and water aerobics are perfectly acceptable activities following joint replacement surgery.

The success rate of these procedures, coupled with the growth of a retirement-aged and 30-something population experiencing arthritis pain, has led to an increase in the number of joint replacement surgeries performed annually. In 2002, approximately 381,000 total knee replacements and 193,000 total hip replacements were performed in the United States, compared with 167,000 and 127,000, respectively, 10 years before.

In an effort to better serve the populations

of the Center's planning committee. "WellStar performs well over 1,000 artificial joint replacements a year—as many as any other healthcare system in the state of Georgia," he says. Enumerating the ways a hospital specialty center is able to concentrate resources to deliver high standards and predictable outcomes, Kelly states, "WellStar's Center for Joint Replacement collectively combines and utilizes the talents of all the people involved in helping a patient get a new lease on life—from the

thing—go out to dinner, go to church—because of pain in their hip or knee. After surgery, they feel younger because of restoration of mobility. They no longer feel dependent or burdensome."



Swayze, who has been affiliated with WellStar since 1992 and was chief of surgery at WellStar Kennestone Hospital from 1998-2000, looks forward to a day when WellStar's

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of Cobb, Cherokee, Douglas, Paulding and Bartow Counties, WellStar Health System has opened its Center for Joint Replacement, which uses a patient-centered team approach to provide outstanding quality care for patients needing partial or total joint replacements. Developed by a committee of orthopedic physicians, nursing and therapy staff, the Center officially opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 27.

Susan Easter, program coordinator, says, "We are excited to bring this new center to our patients. With it comes dedicated physicians, staff and facilities, and the utilization of leading-edge techniques and equipment. Our comprehensive pre-operative education program has been designed to help patients and family members through the whole process—from initial diagnosis through successful rehabilitation."



Dr. Robert A. Kelly, an orthopaedic surgeon with Resurgens Orthopaedics who has been affiliated with WellStar Health System for 10 years, is a key member

of the Center's planning committee. "WellStar performs well over 1,000 artificial joint replacements a year—as many as any other healthcare system in the state of Georgia," he says. Enumerating the ways a hospital specialty center is able to concentrate resources to deliver high standards and predictable outcomes, Kelly states, "WellStar's Center for Joint Replacement collectively combines and utilizes the talents of all the people involved in helping a patient get a new lease on life—from the

doctors who help implant the artificial joint, to the nurses who take care of the patient before and after surgery, to the therapists who help the patient go through rehab. The whole team is well-versed and knowledgeable about the procedure. Additionally, the Center standardizes all phases of the process, thus creating an efficient and durable product that is reproducible from patient to patient, with the final result a pain-free joint." And becoming pain-free is the objective. Most physicians agree that when joint pain interferes with the lifestyle an individual wants, joint replacement surgery is appropriate. According to Dr. Scott Swayze, an orthopaedic surgeon with Pinnacle Orthopedics and another key member of the planning committee for WellStar's Center for Joint Replacement, pain is usually the deciding factor in a patient's decision to have surgery. "Surgery to replace a hip, knee or shoulder has been shown to relieve pain and stiffness, as well as to restore motion and independence," he says. "People talk about joint replacements as being life-altering operations. Before surgery, they aren't able to do any-

Center for Joint Replacement will be able to put certain patients on a fast track through surgery, allowing them to go home within 24 hours. "Over time we will be able to convert patients to shorter and shorter hospital stays. We are becoming better at educating patients pre-operatively about their procedure; providing choices regarding surgical approaches, including minimally invasive techniques; and utilizing outpatient and home treatments post-operatively. I imagine someday it will be almost like instant surgery."

In conjunction with the opening of the new Center for Joint Replacement, WellStar Health System is working to ensure that residents of Metro Atlanta are aware that physician experts are available to take care of arthritic problems at WellStar. "We're trying to let everyone know we're here," says Swayze. "There's no need to drive past WellStar to go elsewhere. We're as up-to-date on joint replacements as anyone in Atlanta."

For more information about WellStar's Center for Joint Replacement, call 770-793-5113.