

New Artificial Cervical Disc

No Pain, More Gain!

by Lisa M. Mayers



For those suffering from chronic pain as a result of cervical degenerative disc disease, their only surgical option, until recently, was spinal fusion. Fusion surgery involved removing the bulging, herniated disc that was causing pressure on the spinal cord, and fusing two or more vertebrae together. The result was limited motion at the site of the fusion.

Now, patients can avoid spinal fusion, and instead have a procedure that is much more like hip or knee replacement surgery. FDA approval was granted for the first artificial cervical disc in late July 2007. Dr. Saeed Bajwa of Southern NY Neurosurgical Group, P.C. performed the first artificial cervical disc surgery in the region at Wilson Regional Medical Center on August 7, 2007.

“This surgery will change the way people with disc problems live,” explained Dr. Bajwa. “The artificial disc preserves normal range of motion and eliminates the disc pain.”

The surgery, one of the first in the nation using the newly approved Prestige™ artificial cervical disc took just an hour and a half, and marks a major step forward in the surgical treatment of degenerative cervical disc disease.

Artificial disc replacement has been successfully used for lumbar degenerative disc disease for several years. Both are part of a trend toward “motion preservation” spinal surgery. The prosthetic discs are so highly evolved that they mimic a healthy disc almost exactly. This allows for a natural range of motion, while eliminating disc pain.

Jennifer Canali, a 35-year-old woman from Elmira, was Dr. Bajwa’s patient on August 7th. She had a previous cervical spinal fusion surgery in 2004 and was scheduled to undergo a second when Dr. Bajwa called to tell her about the newly approved disc.

“When Dr. Bajwa told me about the artificial disc and offered me the option of having this surgery instead I didn’t hesitate for a moment,”

said Canali. “I knew it was a great opportunity.”

Canali was pain free immediately after the surgery, spent the night in the hospital, and was discharged the next morning. “I was amazed at how good I felt,” said Canali. “No neck brace and full movement in my neck.”

The investigational study done prior to approval of the Prestige™ artificial cervical disc was one of the largest randomized, controlled, multi-center studies ever done for a medical device designed to be used in the cervical spine. Overall, it showed a statistically superior outcome at 24 months, compared to traditional treatment.

“We are very excited to be able to offer patients in our area the latest surgical techniques and procedures,” said Dr. Bajwa. “We will continue to identify those patients who can benefit from these new procedures and offer it to them.”

Cervical degenerative disc disease is one of the most common causes of neck and arm pain. When discs are diseased or herniated and rupture or bulge they can compress the nerves of the spinal cord and cause numbness in the neck, shoulders, and arms. In some cases, the compression can cause enough damage over time that there is loss of function in the arms. Surgery is the only treatment in those cases.

Canali is enthusiastic as well. “I think fusions will soon be a thing of the past. I would recommend this surgery to anyone who is a candidate!” **HL**

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